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[NATALIE RECOGNIZING HER HUSBAND'S VALET.]

THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

BY LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER III.

Why look you sad?
Be great in act, as you have been in thought:
Let not the world see fear and sad distrust
Govern the motion of a queenly eye;
Be stirring as the times; be fire with fire;
Threaten the threat'ner, and outface the brow
Of bragging horror. *Shakespeare.*

LEAVING the Grange, Natalie Afton hurried through the garden and orchard to the near country road that lay beyond them, and then she sped along, keeping near the green hedge, and smiling as she heard the voice of her grandmother in the distance calling her name.

"They are looking for me in the orchard," she thought, a defiant look gathering in her blue eyes. "They will not find me. I shall not go home till evening, when Hugh Pauld will be gone!"

She continued her rapid course until she came upon a small white cottage, nestling in a mass of shrubbery, and surrounded by a neglected garden.

This was the cottage that had been tenanted the year before by the lover to whom Mrs. Afton had scornfully alluded.

Taking a key from her bosom, Natalie unlocked the gate, after a swift glance up and down the road, to assure herself that her movements were not noticed, and then she entered the garden and approached the dwelling.

It was evidently deserted, but another key, which she produced, gave her ingress to the house, and she was soon roaming through its handsomely-furnished rooms, dusting, here, and arranging ornaments there, as though she were the mistress of the place.

Leaving the little drawing-room, she went up-stairs to a pretty little apartment that had evidently served as a smoking-room, although fishing-tackle, guns, &c., were strewn about in profusion.

The floor was covered with a yellow straw-matting, and the furniture was exceedingly light and simple.

Two or three engravings of hunting scenes adorned the white walls, and upon the carved wooden mantelpiece were a couple of porcelain vases in which rustled a few dried and withered blossoms.

Natalie seated herself, and looked upon all these things with an air that showed them to be as familiar to her as precious.

She had put those blossoms, when fresh, into their vases, when loving voice and eyes had rewarded the attention. Her fingers had wrought the little watch-case on the wall, and the half-worn slippers in the corner.

How many days, when her relatives had neither known, nor cared for, her whereabouts, she had spent in this very room, reading to its indolent tenant while he watched the smoke curl upward from his cigar, or talked with him of the great world beyond her quiet home—that great world of which she had heard so much and knew so little!

How many evenings, when her grandmother, if she thought of her at all, supposed her sleeping in the room at the Grange, she had stolen to this place to spend a few enchanted hours with her lover-husband.

It was he who had taught her music, and the little cottage piano in the corner had been the instrument upon which she had practised the lessons he had taught her.

But he had not confined his instructions to music. He had found her neglected and, in many things, ignorant, and he had endeavoured to supply her deficiencies, teaching her the sweetest of all lessons—love!

"Dear Elmer!" sighed the girl, tenderly. "I ought not to have told grandmother of our marriage. I should not have done so, had she not quite driven me to it! I will be very guarded hereafter, and will not breathe a word of the truth until Elmer comes to claim me!"

Her blue eyes grew moist and tender as she thought of him, and reviewed, as she often did, the circumstances of their early acquaintance.

They were full of sweet memories to her.

Elmer Keyes had come up to the neighbouring village the previous summer, while making a tour.

He had intended to spend but a day in the vicinity, but on the very day of his arrival he had encountered Natalie Afton in a romantic spot by the brook, and had inquired of her his way.

Her beauty, shy modesty, and habitually defiant air, had charmed him, and he had lingered to converse with her.

The result of that chance-meeting had been that the very next day the young stranger had hired the cottage which Natalie was now visiting, and had despatched his valet to town with an order to an upholsterer, which order was duly executed, and the cottage furnished, almost without the knowledge of the village-gossips.

The dwelling chosen by the stranger was rather secluded, out of the village, and not far distant from Afton Grange, a combination of circumstances that greatly favoured his designs.

For he had formed the design of winning the lovely Natalie.

He met her again and again, discovered her favourite retreats, learned her complete isolation from all society, and soon discovered that her eyes grew brighter at his coming, and that her cheeks flushed under his gaze—indications that her heart was his!

He had told her that he was the younger son of a gentleman, and would not dare marry without the consent of his father, except he kept his marriage secret.

Natalie believed him, and, when he spoke to her honeyed words of love, she breathed her timid joy in his ears, and hid her face in his bosom, so happy that it seemed to her her heart must break under its weight of bliss.

Whatever wicked designs Elmer Keyes might have cherished against the honour of Natalie, fled before the gaze of her pure eyes, and the trust and confidence of her manner. He begged her to marry him, and she consented. Bewitched by her beauty, tenderness and love, he had made her secretly his wife, and thereafter all her stolen hours were spent with him at the cottage.

A blissful summer had thus passed.

When autumn came, Elmer Keyes went away

promising to return soon to visit his child-wife. He retained the cottage, that he might come to it when he pleased, and he did so often during the season that followed.

Those were the white days of poor Natalie's life. When spring came, he wrote that it must be long before he could return, but a subsequent letter informed her that he would come in June.

Three long months since I have seen Elmer!" mused the young girl. "It is time to expect his coming. He may come this very night!"

The thought was exciting, and Natalie sprang up, opened the windows to admit the pure, fresh air, and hurried down to the garden, where she obtained a plentiful supply of common flowers.

She filled the vases on the mantel-piece, and made bouquets with which to loop back the white muslin curtains at the windows. Then she opened the piano, ran over its keys with her slender fingers, indulged in a joyful trill or two, and placed a vase of flowers on each side of the music-rack.

She completed her attentions by putting the slippers before her husband's chair, and rearranging the books and ornaments upon the centre table.

While engaged in this latter occupation, a card, torn and soiled, fluttered into observation.

Natalie examined it with eager curiosity.

There was no name upon it, the upper part of the pasteboard having been torn carelessly away with the evident intention of destroying it, but an address remained, although scarcely legible.

"Why, Park Lane is in the most fashionable part of London," said Natalie, making out the address. "Can it be possible that Elmer lives there? He told me he lived in the country. This must be the address of one of his fashionable town-friends. I may as well keep it to show Elmer that he was not quite particular enough to thoroughly destroy it," and her eyes sparkled with playful mischief. "It is torn nearly through, and quite crumpled, yet I have made it out!"

Thrusting the scrap of paper in her pocket, she bestowed a long and loving glance upon every inanimate object in the room, and then wandered out of the house and through the garden.

Looking the door and gate as she had found them, the young girl set out for the village post-office with a bounding step and light heart.

What did she care for the rage of her relatives, or the anger of Hugh Fauld, while she was the wife of Elmer Keyes and her husband loved her?

She noticed now, as hitherto, how people avoided her in the village streets, how no one spoke to her or smiled upon her, and her mother's history recurred to her, flushing her cheeks at the remembrance.

What if Elmer should hear that story and cast her off, because she did not know her father's name, because her mother had disgraced the name of Afton?

Her step grew slower, and her face clouded at the thought. Her voice was quite faint, when entering the little office, she asked the burly postmaster if there were anything for her.

The official, of whom she had often made the same inquiry, and who knew her lovely face well, handed her a bulky letter, at sight of which Natalie smiled joyfully.

It was addressed in Elmer's handwriting, and she hurried back to the cottage to read it.

Elmer's letters had grown infrequent of late, and Natalie sometimes thought that his manner towards her, on the occasion of his latest visit to the cottage, had been cold and constrained, but she had summoned up all her faith and trust in him, never allowing herself to suspect evil, and believing that he had cares of his own with which he did not wish to burden her.

She was, therefore, totally unprepared for the shock awaiting her.

She did not open her letter until she had gained her husband's smoking-room, and then she flung her hat carelessly upon the floor, and turned the massive over in her hands, before breaking the seal.

"It is heavier than usual," she exclaimed, with childish glee. "Elmer has sent me his picture, perhaps, to make up for his long silence. He never would give it me before!"

She opened the massive in joyful expectation, but no picture was contained in it. Instead of a picture, a bank-note fell into her lap.

"One hundred pounds!" cried Natalie, in astonishment, examining it. "Elmer must have sent it to enable me to come to him. But it's a great deal too much. Why, I never saw so much money in all my life!"

She directed her eager, expectant gaze to the letter, but as she slowly read its contents the colour died out of her sweet young face, an appalled expression gathered in her eyes, and she shivered as with cold.

She read it quite through in a dazed, frightened manner, then looked pitiously around her, mused faintly, and sank unconscious to the floor.

The letter which had so cruelly struck out all joy and peace from her life remained tightly grasped in her hands. Its contents were as follows:

"NATALIE.—Pardon me, if, at last, I venture to speak plainly. The truth may seem harsh, but it must be spoken. It is about time your dream was ended. You must have seen that I have long since begun to tire of you. My infrequent visits to the cottage and constrained manner while there must have shown you that my heart was no longer yours. My letters, so seldom, cold, and distant—purposely so—must have assured you that your hold upon me had weakened. In short, Natalie, you have seen me for the last time. I have been thus frank that you may no longer look for my coming, or waste your thoughts upon me.

"The cottage will be given up by my valet immediately, and strangers will take possession of it, so your visits to it must cease.

"You will wonder at this, Natalie. You will cease to wonder when I assure you that you are not legally my wife! You have no profits of any marriage between us, and can obtain none. My name is not Elmer Keyes, and, in all my statements concerning myself, I have deceived you. I will not deny that I loved, or fancied I loved, you, but another love now possesses my heart. You surely could never have suspected that I would introduce you to the world as my wife, with the stain upon your name!

These were the heartless words that had crushed the loving, trusting heart of the young girl, and they were seared into her brain as with a hot iron.

She lay a long time in her swoon, but consciousness at last returned, and she sat up and smiled pitifully, murmuring brokenly:

"Oh, it can't be true! Elmer couldn't have written that wicked, cruel letter! He does love me, and he is my husband! He will come back!"

She sobbed audibly as her eyes rested upon the signature of the missive, and gave way to a burst of tears which mercifully came to relieve the heavy weight upon heart and brain.

"He knew my history, then?" she wept. "He taught me because I bore my mother's name. Oh, grandmother must have been right. My mother's fate is mine, and it only remains for me to lie down and die as she did. My heart is broken!"

In her wild despair and anguish the poor girl prayed for death, and thought longingly of her mother's grave, wishing that she might share it.

But her mood changed.

She arose and paced the floor, a defiant look in her eyes, and a proud, resolute expression upon her lips, murmuring:

"I will not accept my mother's fate! I will not yield to this apparent destiny! I know that I am a wedded wife, and Elmer shall be forced to acknowledge me! He shall not cast me off thus!"

She drew from her bosom a wedding-ring, the ring Elmer had once pressed upon her finger, and which she had carefully concealed at his request, since the occasion of her marriage. She did not kiss it now, as she had done daily since its reception by her, but placed it upon her finger, with the determination to wear it thenceforth and always.

Her grief was not all for herself. She wept because the idol she had erected had proved to be but base clay, because she had worshipped him as the essence of all goodness and nobleness, and he had proved himself utterly wanting in manliness and integrity.

It was a heavy blow, almost too heavy to bear.

But Natalie, gentle as she was, possessed a hidden strength of character and resolution which she now called forth into activity. She resolved that she would prove her marriage, discover the name and identity of her husband, and claim his respect, if she had indeed lost his love.

We will not attempt to record the struggles through which she passed that day. It is enough to say that at times she wept and moaned despairingly, praying for death, and at other times she nerved herself to meet and overcome the difficulties in her way, feeling a scorn and contempt for the man she had called her husband, yet determined that he should yet do her justice.

But at last she grew quiet and resolved, and began calmly to think of her immediate movements.

She put the crumpled letter in her bosom, and the bank-note in her little pocket-book, although it had at first been her intention to tear it in pieces.

"I have a right to it as his wife!" she thought, proudly. "It shall serve me well, for with its aid I shall accomplish all I desire!"

Tying on her hat, she gave a last look to the room in which she had spent so many happy hours and those last of crowning misery, and then she stole from the house.

The evening had fallen, but there was both moonlight and starlight, and the poor deserted young wife paused in the garden, reluctant to leave it for the

last time, and regarding the flowers and shrubs as if they were her dear friends, with whom she could not lightly part.

She was standing there, the waves of anguish sweeping over her soul at the remembrance of the many moonlight nights she had stood in that garden with Elmer's arm around her waist, and Elmer's voice whispering words of love in her ears, when she heard the sound of wheels in the road, heard them stop in front of the cottage, and then beheld the garden gate open.

Stepping instinctively back into the shadow of a spreading lilac tree, Natalie saw two men enter the garden, one of whom she immediately recognized as her husband's valet.

His companion was one of the villagers, whom the girl had seen before.

The valet produced a key to the front door, and seemed surprised at finding it unlocked. Without a word to his companion, however, he led the way into the cottage, and Natalie soon beheld lights flashing from window to window, and heard the busy sounds incidental to a removal.

She comprehended that, as Elmer had said, the dwelling had been given up, and that the valet had been instructed to effect the removal of the goods in the evening, that she might not witness it, and perhaps question her husband's servant.

It was not a long task to box up the few simple articles of furniture remaining in the cottage, and the two men soon came down stairs, bearing a box between them, which they deposited upon the waiting cart.

They then started to re-enter the house, the villager in advance, when Natalie glided from her concealment and touched the valet upon the arm.

He started as if he had seen a ghost.

"You here, miss?" he said, uneasily, congratulating himself that his associate had passed out of sight and hearing.

"Madam, if you please, Roke!" returned Natalie, haughtily, and with the air of an empress.

"Ah, yes, madam! Didn't you get my master's letter—that the cottage was given up?"

"I did. He neglected to state his present address, Roke. Is he still in London?"

"I suppose so, miss—that is, madam!" was the evasive reply.

"Can you tell me his exact residence?" inquired the young wife, in as careless a tone as she could assume.

"I cannot, madam! I know nothing about my master's affairs, except that I am to take away his furniture, and give up the key to the agent. If you want to know anything more, you must apply to my master himself, at the post-office address he gave you!"

There was an air of insolence about the valet that poor Natalie was quick to notice, and she drew up her slight form with a dignity that compelled a more respectful demeanour from the pampered menial.

"Very well, Roke," she said, quietly, yet as if feeling herself his master's wife.

She turned away, going towards the gate.

When beyond sight of the cottage, she pressed her hands to her heart, as if a deadly blow had been struck upon it, and, gasping for breath, she staggered onward towards the Grange.

CHAPTER IV.

Are often welcomed when they are guests.

Favourable responses to the hospitable invitations of Miss Wycherly were duly received, and in good time the invited guests arrived at the Castle.

As the Lady Leopoldo secretly expected, the first arrival was Basil Montmar, her betrothed.

They indulged in a few hours of tender communion, wandering about the grounds and to the grotto together, and exchanging those vows so dear to all lovers, whether rich or poor. Miss Wycherly was too self-absorbed to notice any change in their manner towards each other, and no one suspected their engagement, which was for the present to remain secret.

The evening train, however, of the same day brought additional guests, and the Lady Leopoldo was obliged to bestow upon them much of the attention her lover would gladly have monopolized.

The second arrival was that of the Misses Braithwaite, with their portly mother—two fair young girls who had seen but one season in society and who regarded the gay world as a sort of fairy land.

Then came the Lady Ellen Haigh, a pretty young widow, full of life and spirits, and therefore in great request among her friends to enliven parties at their country-houses.

She brought in her train the Earl of Templecombe and Sir Wilton Werner, the intimate friend of his

lordship, and under the quiet tact of the hostess and the mirthfulness of the Lady Ellen, the entire party were soon on the pleasantest terms with each other, and even the timid Emily Braithwaite felt quite at ease before the first evening at the Castle had ended.

It was observed by Basil Montmaur that Lord Templecombe devoted himself in particular to the Lady Leopolde, and he also noticed, with a thrill of joy, that the maiden seemed to avoid rather than encourage her cousin's attentions.

The evening passed in conversation, discussions of plans of future amusement, music, etc., Miss Alethea sustaining her part as principal hostess very creditably to herself and very pleasantly to her guests.

At a late hour the party separated for the night, going to their rooms. Basil Montmaur lingered in the drawing-room, after the departure of the rest, to press the hand of his betrothed and whisper tender words in her ears. The return of Miss Alethea, in quest of her niece, soon terminated the interview, but Basil went up to his apartments with a glow on his cheeks and a happy light in his eyes, feeling still Leopolde's timid answering kiss upon his lips.

One by one the lights died out from the various rooms of the Castle, until one alone was left, and that beamed brightly from a chamber in the western tower—the room allotted to Lord Templecombe.

It was a pleasant apartment, luxuriously furnished, and lighted by a dozen wax candles fixed in burnished silver sconces. At one side of the room, divided from it by bright silk curtains looped up with gold cord, was a deep alcove, which contained a low French bed of most tempting style.

In the outer chamber, which served as a parlour, were seated in earnest conversation the Earl of Templecombe and Sir Wilton.

The former was not yet thirty years of age, tall, and slight in figure, with a complexion quite colourless from constant dissipation. His face was florid, his eyes very light blue, and his hair of the hue of flax. There was nothing striking about him, save his generally faded look, and the scrupulous elegance of his attire, and an observer would have been inclined to regard him as characterless, but for the habitual compression of his thin lips and an occasional sharp gleam like lightning from his eyes.

Sir Wilton Werner had seen ten years more of life, and had something of a dashing air. Like the earl, he was a dandy in his dress, and his black eyes and hair and his neatly trimmed facial ornaments gave him a more distinctive look than his friend could boast.

There was much in the character and relations of these two men to each other to suggest the German legend of Dr. Faustus and Mephistopheles, Sir Wilton bearing a remarkable resemblance to the generally received notions of the latter. His eyes had a strange unathomatic expression, and his very mouthache had a peculiar look, its owner delighting to arrange it in the fashion which painters unanimously ascribe to "the gentleman in black."

"You are right, Werner," the earl was saying, leaning carelessly back in his chair. "The Lady Leopolde is a remarkably beautiful woman, and the man who wins her will be a lucky fellow. By the way, it's odd, isn't it, that Montmaur should have come to the Castle for a month's visit after the communication I made to him? He didn't seem to look at all heart-broken this evening!"

"You are right—he is not suffering from heart-disease," and Sir Wilton moaned. "He has either decided to give up the field to you, and content himself with humbler game, or else he is prepared to enter the lists as your rival. In either case, you have nothing to fear. Your rank and fortune will outweigh his handsome face any day!"

A slight flush tinged the earl's cheeks, as he responded, in a tone of awakened vanity:

"I flatter myself, Werner, that my personal attractions are not less than Montmaur's. I am looking a little pale now, it is true, but I have made many a woman's heart ache, I assure you."

"I don't doubt it," was the dry response. "There are few women who would not sigh to be a countess and the proprietress of vast, unencumbered estates."

"Why do you put it in that way?" said his lordship, in a tone of annoyance. "I have made more than one woman die of love for me, without even telling her my name. I don't call myself, by any means."

Sir Wilton was constrained to acknowledge that the earl was not at all ill-looking, an acknowledgment which could be made without speaking falsely. In truth, with a dash of colour in his cheeks, and a look of interest in his eyes, Lord Templecombe would not have been deemed unhandsome.

"As you say," said his lordship, complacently, "I have nothing to fear from Basil Montmaur. I wish he had not been invited to the Castle, but I suppose that, as he is a relative of the family, Leopolde could not neglect him. It isn't pleasant, however," he added,

"to be continually reminded by his presence that, should I die unmarried, he will be the next Earl of Templecombe. I believe I hate him! I would do anything rather than that he should succeed me and enjoy what is now mine."

"Then marry," advised Werner. "Whatever his object in coming to the Castle now, I am quite sure you can win your cousin. Montmaur loves her, but so do you, and your love is as valuable as his. You have only to flatter the Lady Leopolde—women are all alike—and she will marry you any day you may choose. As soon as you can, you had better speak to her on the subject. It would hardly do to let Montmaur get the start of you in proposing, and so discover that you spoke falsely the other day when you declared to him that you were engaged to your cousin."

The earl assented, remarking that he should begin to pay his court to the Lady Leopolde without delay, and that he should fear very little from Basil's rivalry when he once began to exert his own powers of fascination.

"Now that we've settled my future course," he said, after some further conversation in regard to his cousin, "allow me to ask, Werner, why you don't marry? You are forty years old, a baronet, and the possessor of considerable wealth."

"Which should be greatly augmented, to suit my luxurious tastes," interrupted Sir Wilton. "I don't object to marriage, Templecombe, although I like my freedom. If I could marry a rich wife, I should be very happy, provided she suited me in other respects as in her fortune."

"Well, you have an excellent opportunity now to win a rich and pretty wife," returned the earl, with vivacity. "Here is Lady Ellen Haigh under the same roof with you for a month. Her husband left her a handsome fortune, and she is young enough—not yet twenty-four."

Sir Wilton shrugged his shoulders expressively, replying:

"I do not dislike Lady Ellen Haigh, but I've no desire to make her Lady Werner. She is too gay, too restless, to suit me."

"Then why not pay your suit to one of the Misses Braithwaite? I understand they will each have a very good fortune, and neither of them is at all gay."

"But they are too timid, and blush too easily."

"If you're going to be so particular, Werner," declared the earl, smiling, "you may as well resign yourself to bachelorhood. You will never find any one to come up to your ideal."

"I have found one already," said the baronet, quietly.

"You have? And you never mentioned the fact to me. Are you engaged to be married?"

"No. I have never yet ventured to speak of love to her. I presume she does not even suspect the sentiments I entertain towards her."

The earl's face unconsciously darkened with a look of distrust, and he demanded:

"This lady—is she my cousin?"

"The Lady Leopolde! No, Templecombe. The Lady Leopolde is too young and dazzling for me. If she were my wife, I should be jealous of every fellow that approached her. I will be frank with you. I love Miss Wycherly!"

The earl stared at the baronet in astonishment.

"That iceberg!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, I love that iceberg. Her calm, statuesque beauty is what I most admire. Her very coldness is, in my eyes, more beautiful than the fire and glow of the Lady Leopolde! I like her quiet, unmoved tones, her stately carriage, her queenly manner. In short, Vane, Alethea Wycherly is the only woman I ever loved—the only woman I will ever marry."

"What infatuation! Still, I wish you success, Werner, and will do all in my power to further your cause with her. But you would better have loved one of those marble statues on the staircase than Miss Alethea. I don't believe she has a heart."

"Perhaps not," and Werner smiled. "Yet I have a theory that under all that ice of her manner, she hides a heart like a volcano—never at rest, and always flaming. It may be only theory, for I never saw her change colour or show the least emotion."

"I know her better than you do, Sir Wilton," responded Lord Templecombe. "I have known her years, and I can assure you she is utterly heartless—ice all through. How odd that you should really love her! I know she has many admirers, but I supposed they sought her for her wealth, not from love. You are probably the only man on earth who loves her!"

"Not so, Vane. All are not as blind as you are. I was at the club the other day, dining with half a dozen of the fellows, and I offered a toast to Miss Wycherly, with a compliment or two. The Marquis of Waldemere, who has just come into his title, you know, happened in time to hear the toast, and he glared at me as if he would annihilate me on the spot. He took occasion to inform me privately soon after, in most savage tones, that I would do better to let Miss

Wycherly's name alone. I suppose he is one of her rejected suitors!"

"It's very curious that he should have constituted himself Miss Alethea's champion," remarked his lordship, wonderingly. "The Marquis of Waldemere is a confirmed woman-bater. He has buried himself for years on a lonely estate among the Welsh mountains, going nowhere and seeing no one until now that he has come into his title. I don't believe he even knows Aunt Alethea. His championship was probably a momentary vagary."

"Oh, no, it wasn't. In reply to the very spirited lecture he gave me in regard to Miss Wycherly, I told him that I hoped some day to have a right to say what I pleased about her. He turned as pale as death, and stammered something of which I couldn't catch the meaning, and finally turned away, leaving the club-house. You may rest assured that Miss Wycherly has refused him at some period!"

A silence of some minutes succeeded this remark, and the friends then proceeded to discuss the probabilities in favour of the success of each with the chosen object of his love.

At a late hour Sir Wilton arose, highly pleased with the encouragement given him by the earl, and, taking up his candle, crossed the corridor to his own room, which was opposite that of his friend and in the central part of the Castle.

A few minutes more and the last light died out from the tower-chamber, and the Castle was wrapped in sombre silence.

A few hours later, and the scene was full of activity and gaiety.

After a late breakfast, the guests, with Lady Leopolde, strolled about the lawn under the trees, visited the flower-gardens, and penetrated to the park and grove.

Sir Wilton Werner preferred to remain in the drawing-room with Miss Wycherly, but the other visitors finally gathered together on the lawn, and appearing to enjoy themselves greatly, he quitted his hostess and joined them.

A few minutes' survey of the party gave him considerable inward amusement.

Both the earl and Basil Montmaur evinced considerable desire to attend upon their lovely young relative, and the Lady Leopolde, apparently unconscious of their wishes, devoted herself to Mrs. Braithwaite and her timid younger daughter, leaving her lovers to entertain Lady Ellen Haigh and Miss Braithwaite.

The conversation, however, became general, as also the merriment, and the party grouped themselves under the trees upon the quaint seats of twisted grape-vines, where the Lady Leopolde ordered ices to be brought.

They were pleasantly engaged in sipping the beverage, and recalling events of the past season in town, when the lodge-gates swung open and a horseman dashed up the avenue.

As he approached the group under the trees, he slackened his pace, glanced at each member of it, scrutinized Sir Wilton Werner particularly, and then dashed on towards the Castle.

The baronet returned the gaze with interest, biting his lip with sudden annoyance as he recognized the new-comer, and then whispered to Lord Templecombe, while the attention of the remainder of the party was diverted:

"The Marquis of Waldemere! What unlucky fate has brought him here? What did I tell you last night, Vane? The fellow is certainly jealous of me!"

There was as much pleasure as annoyance in the last sentence.

The others had recognized the stranger, and Mrs. Braithwaite, with a glance at her daughters, exclaimed:

"My dear Lady Leopolde, I understood that our party is quite complete. Is the Marquis of Waldemere to be also Miss Wycherly's guest?"

"I do not know," replied the Lady Leopolde. "I am not aware that he is invited, or even that my aunt is acquainted with him. He has probably stopped for a few moments only. I dare say he is visiting a neighbour."

Mrs. Braithwaite looked a little disappointed at this response, and Lady Ellen Haigh exclaimed:

"If the marquis were only to be a guest here, it would be delightful. I have heard he is a perfect Turk. There must be some mystery in his life, else why should he have shut himself up in the midst of those dreary Welsh mountains, abjured society, and lived like a monk—at his age too? I know there must be something romantic in his history, and I only wish I knew what it was!"

While these speculations were uttered, their subject had dismounted in front of the Castle portico, thrown his reins to a groom in waiting, and ascending the steps knocked loudly for admittance.

Miss Wycherly, looking from her window, caught

sight of his dark, stern face, and, uttering a stifled cry, sank almost fainting into a chair, her face, usually so calm and unmoved, actually convulsed with some terrible emotion which his presence had evoked.

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

THE French have discovered that from the roots of the lucerne they can make these ingredients:—sugar, soap, and paper.

MR. WARREN DE LA RUE, with his 13 in. telescope, has obtained photographs of the moon so perfect that they bear being enlarged to a diameter of three feet.

It has been determined that the heart, contracting at the rate of seventy-five pulsations to the minute, during the twenty-four hours, performs an amount of work equivalent to raising a hundredweight to the height of 4,463 ft.

A LAKE about two miles in circumference, from which borax is obtained in extremely pure condition and in large quantities, has been discovered in California. The borax hitherto in use has been obtained from Tuscany.

WHAT IS COAL?

WHAT is coal? is a question more satisfactorily answered by a little roundabout explanation than by a direct reply. To say that coal is altered and mineralized vegetable matter is true; but the definition is too curt to be readily intelligible.

Every one knows something of peat and peat-mosses; well, this peat is simply coal in its first stage of development. Were the peat-moss submerged and covered over by deposits of mud and clay and sand, it would in course of time undergo important chemical changes; by which part of its gaseous contents (oxygen, hydrogen, &c.) would be discharged, and the mass reduced to a compact coaly substance known as lignite, or brown-coal. Such brown-coals are abundant in many countries (Germany, Austria, New Zealand, &c.), and worked for economical purposes; and were they subjected to still further changes, they would in course of ages become converted into shining stony coals, like those which are now raised in the coal-fields of Great Britain.

The truth is, coal occurs in the earth's crust in every stage of development, from the peat-mosses and swamp-growths still in process of accumulation on the surface, down through the tertiary brown-coals to the bituminous stone-coals of the secondary and primary periods, and from these again down to the still older non-bituminous anthracites and graphites.

All, in fact, have had a similar origin. They are mere vegetable masses that have undergone different degrees of mineralization—the recent vegetable full of volatile matters, the lignites less so, the bituminous coals giving off smoke and flame, the anthracites barely smoking, and the graphites masses of pure de-bituminized carbon. They are all coals, and belong to the same family—those in the younger formations still retaining much of their vegetable structure and full of volatile matter, while those in the older formations have seemingly lost all traces of structure, and have been all but deprived of their volatile constituents.

But even where no structure is obvious to the naked eye, it can generally be rendered apparent by submitting thin transparent slices to the microscope. By this means the vegetable origin of the most compact and glistening coal is often revealed as clearly as the tissues in living plants, and thus the observer is enabled to determine not only the organic nature of the mass, but the botanical peculiarities of the order concerned in its formation.

Like all mixed rocks, however, coal presents itself in many varieties. We cannot conceive of vegetable matter (whether drifted or grown *in situ*) being associated with sedimentary strata without its being mingled more or less with the earthly impurities of these sediments. These impurities, according to their amount, must necessarily confer on different coals different structures.

Besides, varieties will also arise from the conditions of the vegetable mass itself, according as it may have been unbedded while fresh, or been long exposed to atmospheric decay; according as it may have been suddenly covered up or long exposed to maceration and comminution in water, and notably also according to the nature of the plants composing the mass.

These varieties, according to their structure, texture, and qualities, are generally known as caking-coal, which is soft and tender in the mass, like that of Newcastle, and swells and cakes together in burning; splint or slate coal, which is hard and slaty in texture, like most Scotch coals, and burns free and open; channel parrot coal, which is compact and

jet-like in texture, spirts and crackles when thrown suddenly on the fire, but when ignited, burns with a clear, candle-like flame, and from its composition is chiefly used in gas manufacture; and coarse, foliated, or cubic coal, which is more or less soft, breaks up into large square blocks, and contains in general a large percentage of earthy impurities.

Between these varieties there is, of course, every gradation—coals so pure as to leave only one or two per cent. of ash, others so mixed as to yield from ten to thirty per cent., and many so impure as to be unfit for fuel, and so to pass into shales more or less bituminous.—*Page's Geology.*

NEW MIRRORS OR LOOKING-GLASSES.

As our readers are probably aware, mirrors are plates of glass coated on one side with tinfoil, which is made to adhere to the glass by means of mercury or quicksilver, with which it forms what is called an amalgam, or mixture. The process not only requires—for the best sorts of mirrors—perfectly colourless glass, free from all defects; but considerable time in the manipulation. Immense quantities of quicksilver are required to be floated over the tinfoil, upon which the glass is laid, and pressed by a number of separate weights, which must be carefully put on, so as to equalise the pressure and obviate the danger of breakage. The manufacture cannot be healthy, since it is certain that mercury evaporates at ordinary temperatures, and there can be no doubt that the poisonous metal gets into the system of the workmen.

We have reason to hope that these inconveniences are now likely to cease, and that looking-glasses may be made without quicksilver.

The new reflecting medium is platinum, and the process has been invented by a French chemist, M. Dodé, after devoting seventeen years to researches directed to the discovery of a substitute for quicksilver in the manufacture of looking-glasses. The following is M. Dodé's process as described by himself:—

The platinum is dissolved in a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acid, or, in fact, the well-known nitromuriatic acid. After solution, the excess of acid is evaporated, and a chloride of platinum remains. In this state a certain quantity of essence of lavender is added to it, which keeps it in suspension, and in a very minutely divided condition. To this essence, charged with powdered platinum, a third part of litharge and borate of lead is added. Into this mixture a broad brush is dipped, and the substance is spread over the glass plates, which are then placed in an oven to bake. A single baking of only three hours suffices for about 300 yards of glass, which is at once ready for delivery.

We may observe that in the quicksilvering fifteen days are required before the process is completed. The principle seems to be this:—As the oven is made red-hot, it fuses the borate of lead and the litharge, and thus determines the adherence of the platinum to the softened glass.

One of the chief advantages of this method consists in the fact that perfectly colourless glass and free from defects is not required; the colour and other defects disappear by the metallic coating; however thin the coating, it conceals all the defects of the glass. Any kind of glass, therefore, may be used, even green bottle glass, and thus there is a very great saving, which will effect a reduction of from 40 to 100 per cent. in the price of looking-glasses. As only one side of the glass need be polished, and as inferior glass may be used, it is evident that these platinized looking-glasses may be sold very cheap. Finally, it appears that the process involves no injury whatever to the health of the workmen.

Or the total heat given out by the combustion of the fuel, a man can make a fifth available in the form of actual work, while it has never been found possible to construct a steam-engine that could utilize more than a ninth of the energy of the fuel burnt under the boiler.

To make the distance of the sun from the earth intelligible, M. Guillemin states that a railway train leaving the earth and going at the rate of thirty miles an hour, would require rather more than 347 years to reach it; so that if such a train had started on January 1st, 1866, it would be A.D. 2213 before it arrived at its destination.

EX-PRESIDENT DAVIS ON IRONCLADS AND ORD-NANCE.—In a book lately published by the surgeon who attended on the illustrious prisoner in Fortress Monroe a conversation of Mr. Davis is reported in which he expressed his opinion that England's naval supremacy was lost by the introduction of ironclads. He thought that the United States mailed ships of war would be found unequal to sea voyages. "Wooden bottoms with armoured sides and towers, he could not but think would prove the best. . . . Wooden hulls sat more easily in the water, and both avoided chafing and obtained greater speed by their capacity of yielding a little." Between rifled guns and smooth-bored

he preferred the latter for general service under present circumstances. "For perfection of elaborate workmanship and detail, no guns he had ever seen were superior to some of those received through the blockade from England." Speaking of the fight between the Merrimac and the Federal fleet in Hampton Roads, Mr. Davis asserts that "the Congress had fought gallantly, and that it was in consequence of injuries to the prow of the Merrimac from her shot, and not owing to the attack of the Monitor, that the Merrimac had been compelled to retire. These injuries started a fatal leak, which the weight of armour rendered it impossible to cure; and this was the true cause of the vessel's final failure."

SELF-ACTING SIGNALS.—Sir Ouseck P. Roney describes a new signal which he has seen in Paris. It is the invention of Signor Vincenzi, an Italian engineer, and works by electric agency. It is difficult to describe, but the mechanism comprises cast-iron cases placed along a railway, and containing electric apparatus, which causes the whistle of the locomotive to sound when the way is not clear, or when a train in advance has just passed. The communication between the apparatus and the engine is made by means of steel arms, which meet and act together. The inventor is said to be willing to test his apparatus at his own cost on an English railway.

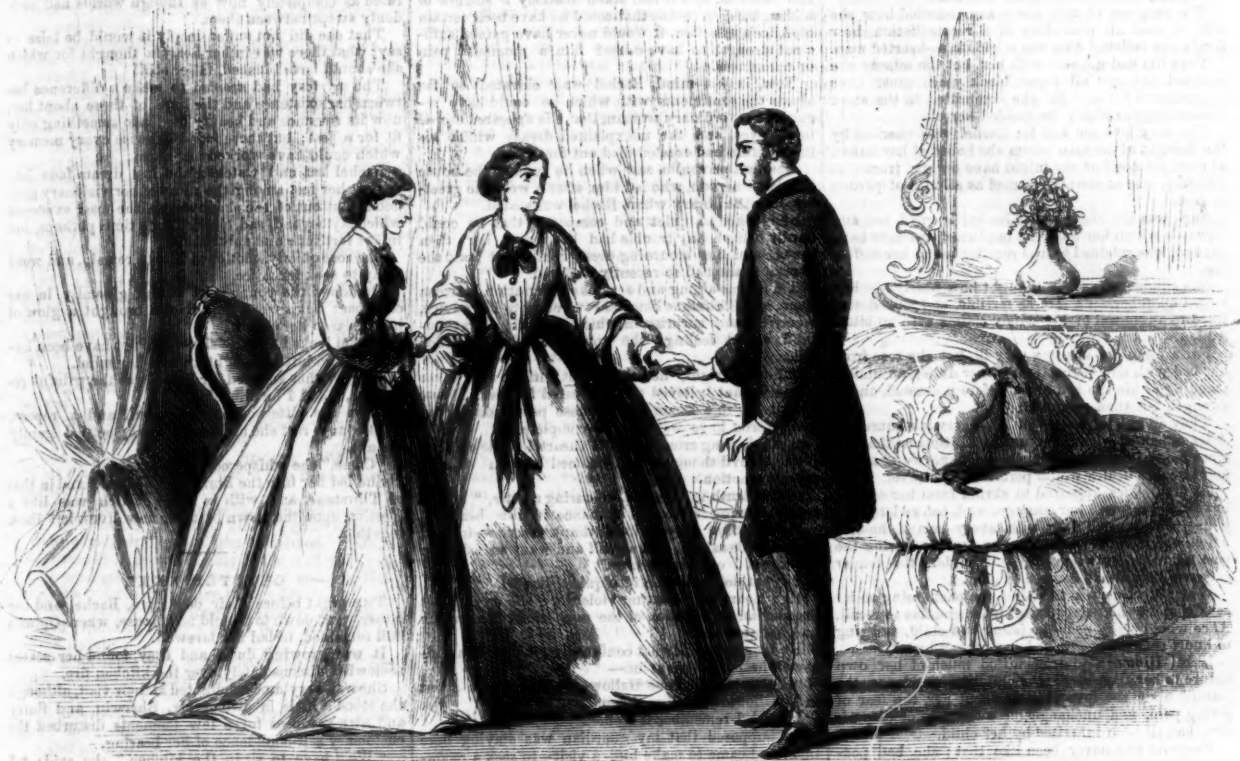
DIGGING WELLS: HOW TO DETERMINE WHERE WATER IS.—At a recent meeting of an American Institute Club, a member related his experience in this matter, as follows:—"An Irishman in his employment, in order to ascertain where he ought to dig to obtain water soonest, got a stone, and buried it overnight in the ground next to the harp. In the morning he found it quite moist, but not sufficiently so to suit his fancy. Next night he tried it in another spot, and it was found very wet on the following morning. 'There,' said Patrick, 'you will find the water not many feet deep, and plenty of it.' Sure enough, in a few days' digging, Patrick confirmed his prediction, notwithstanding the jeers of the workmen—finding a vein which filled the well to overflowing, and rendered it exceedingly difficult to bail out the water so as to stone it. The philosophy of the operation seems to be, that as great evaporation takes place from the surface of the earth during the night, the water rises up from the depths below to supply the loss, and accumulates in the vicinity of the stone, often making quite a puddle."

At a sale of articles found on the Confederate cruiser, Shenandoah, which took place at New York, the British flag under which the ship went to sea was purchased for twenty-two dollars by a Mr. Derby, and sent to Washington.

AMONG the many curiosities of the Paris Exhibition will be a piano-violin. Attached to a piano of the ordinary kind will be a box containing a violin, and from some admirable mechanical arrangement, when the keys are touched the violin will discourse excellent music. It is an American invention.

A MAN proposes to walk across Niagara River, at the Falls, this summer, on a small wire, carrying his wife and son on his back. He also proposes to walk across as the American eagle, and is now having a large leather cage, which will be filled with feathers, and otherwise manipulated so as to resemble a live eagle of monstrous proportions. This is to fit closely about his body, and on walking the wire he will balance himself by flapping the artificial wings. At the same time a rope is to be suspended by him below the wire, to which his son, a boy eight years old, will cling, and go through various athletic performances as his father advances across the Falls. This is bringing the eagle into disrepute.

GREED OF GOLD.—When Napoleon, about 1811, desired to build a palace for the King of Rome, near the Barrier de Passy, the shop of a poor cobbler named Simon stood in the way. Simon having learned what was going on, demanded twenty thousand francs for his tenement. The administrator hesitated for a few days, and then decided to give it; but Simon, goaded by the greed of gain, now asked forty thousand francs. The sum was more than two hundred times its value, and the demand was scouted. An attempt was made to change the frontage, but being found impossible, they went again to the cobbler, who had raised his price to sixty thousand francs. He was offered fifty thousand, but refused. The emperor would not give a franc more, and preferred to change his plans. The speculating son of St. Crispin then saw his mistake, and offered his property for fifty thousand francs, for forty thousand, thirty thousand, coming down at last to ten thousand. The disasters of 1814 happened, and all thoughts of a palace for the King of Rome were abandoned. Some months after, Simon sold his shop for one hundred and fifty francs, and a few days after the sale was removed to an insane asylum; disappointed avarice had driven him crazy.



THIRSTANE.

CHAPTER XXX.

DURING the days which followed, there were many long, serious conversations between Rachel and her father. Each could speak freely; no shadow separated the parent and child, and, for the first time in the life of either, there was an opportunity to open the heart, without fear of misconception or wrong.

Rachel learned something of her mother's past, of the beautiful girlhood, dreaming and wayward as her own, which had settled into that stony apathy she remembered as far back as she could recall her mother's image, and gained a clear knowledge of the events which caused that change.

Isabel Warner had been left an orphan in childhood, and was brought up in the household of Margaret's father. Her aunt, Mrs. Holmes, died while the girls were still very young, and that circumstance strengthened the attachment between them.

Margaret was a year or two older than her cousin, and loved her with all the intensity of her earnest nature. Perhaps that affection for Isabel was the holiest feeling of her life; imperious and exacting as she was, to her cousin she appeared gentle and considerate. She could have forgiven Isabel almost any fault, but to no other person in the world did she extend that leniency.

She was deeply attached to her father and brother, and, when the old gentleman died, the three cousins lived together in the homestead. William Holmes loved Isabel, but he was a shy, reserved man, though with much of Margaret's strength and decision of character under his composure. His sister had fully decided that Isabel should become his wife, and her imperious will never once harboured the idea that it could be opposed or thwarted.

Much as she loved Margaret, Isabel's fear went beyond her affection, and she never ventured to dispute her wishes. She was a lovely, delicate creature, clinging for support to those around her, and as at that time no strong sentiment had ever been roused in her heart, she promised to become William's wife, believing that she cared for him enough to find happiness in the union.

Between the family of Mr. Holmes and the Sherwins there had long existed an implacable enmity. Mr. Holmes was as stubborn and haughty as Margaret herself, his neighbour a proud, tyrannical man, and the two ones had a violent quarrel and a lawsuit concerning a tract of land. Mr. Holmes gained the case and with it the hatred of his opponent.

[RACHEL BRINGS ALICE AND THIRSTANE TOGETHER.]

The Sherwin family spent a portion of each summer in the valley; but it was not until after her father's death that Margaret made the acquaintance of John Sherwin. They loved each other—they were young and headstrong—thoughtless of consequences—reckless to a degree, as youthful love so often is, and they were secretly married. Not even to her brother or Isabel, did Margaret communicate her secret.

That very summer, Sherwin's half-brother, Martin Freeman, came home from France, where he had been educated, under the care of a maternal relative. He was a wild young fellow, but he met and loved Isabel, who returned his affection with equal fervour. With the same secrecy those two were married. Time passed; Isabel had sworn a solemn oath never to reveal her marriage so long as his father lived, and it became necessary to hide her shame.

Martin was gone, and, after his departure, his step-father learned their secret, and threatened Isabel in the most violent manner.

When concealment was thus no longer in her power she fled from Margaret's house, and Mason, then a young woman in Mrs. Sherwin's employ, accompanied her. They went to a little house she owned, and there the two waited.

Instead of any hope of better days came a blow so terrible that it crushed Isabel at once—Martin Sherwin died in France, where his father forced him to return.

Nothing remained then but to drag out the remnant of her days as best she might, and wait for the death which was drawing near.

Margaret was thunderstruck when she found Isabel gone. She discovered among her papers some forgotten notes without signatures, but the writing was the same as that of John Sherwin, and a variety of circumstances conspired to make her believe him a traitor and villain.

She would have borne any shame, rather than have avowed herself his wife after that. She and her brother went away from the homestead. Months passed before they discovered Isabel's retreat, and then they found her dying.

When Margaret taxed her with John Sherwin's guilt, she did not answer; by no sign would she break the pledge she had made her dead husband.

Insane as she already was, Margaret could hardly reflect or know what might be done to preserve Isabel's memory—pity for her cousin was the only human feeling left in her heart, and that, for the time, kept aloof the madness which was soon to hold her firmly in its grasp.

She drove Mason from the house without giving her an opportunity to explain.

William came with his grand, self-sacrificing offer—upon her death-bed Isabel became his wife—a few hours after the ceremony she was a mother and a corpse.

Before the burial, Margaret's child was born. It appeared wonderful that it could have lived; at first they believed it dead, and the last word that Margaret Sherwin's reason took note of for long, long months was that announcement.

She recovered from her illness, but a year elapsed before the insanity left her. She came back to reason to find herself in an asylum; her brother had died during the interval, and she was alone in the world.

John Sherwin sought every opportunity to convince her of his innocence, but in vain. Her brother would never listen during Margaret's sickness, and, after placing her in the asylum, he had remained in that house with the two children.

When he died, Mr. Sherwin took them away. As soon as he learned his wife's recovery he went to see her—the sight of his face almost drove her mad anew.

He wrote to her—his letters were burned unread—he sent Mason, she was driven away, frightened by the woman's frenzy.

She was so firmly convinced that her child had never breathed, that she hardly remembered it, except to feel a fierce joy that it could never learn her sorrow or its father's infamy.

But in her heart she guarded a love for Isabel's memory, and she sent a messenger to Mr. Sherwin, saying only:

"Send me the child."

He supposed that she meant her own, and too generous to cause her an added pang, the babe was restored.

She believed it Isabel's daughter, and, with the little one, returned to her old home.

There had been vague rumours in the neighbourhood, but no human being ever suspected the truth. Margaret went back in her mourning dress—her brother and his wife were dead, she had brought with her their child—not a syllable more of explanation did she offer.

She shut herself up in that gloomy house, and there she dwelt. Mr. Sherwin's mansion was closed, the family dispersed, and there was nothing to disturb her seclusion.

When her husband found that he could gain no opportunity of forcing the truth upon her, he went to the Continent, taking Alice with him, and many years passed before the two met again.

Time had made no change in Margaret, except to strengthen the hardness of her character.

The progress of this story has recorded how she still rejected all possibility of a reconciliation, how firmly she believed Sherwin a bad, false-hearted man.

Thus life had gone on with her, but the misery she endured through all those black years must have compensated for any sin she committed in the stern misanthropy to which she yielded herself.

The very love she had for Rachel was checked by the thought of the man whom she believed her father, as even the comfort she might have derived from that affection, was as sternly rejected as all idea of pardon to him.

Such was the history that Rachel learned, and any reproach which her mother's implacability might have excited, was subdued by the recollection of her suffering.

She shuddered as she thought how nearly she had forced upon herself a fate as terrible, and looked forward to a renewal of her wifely claims with no bitter feeling.

For a fortnight she was very ill, but she rose from her bed with new perceptions of her duties, an understanding of life she had never before possessed, and a strength till then unfound.

They all quietly waited at Mr. Sherwin's house, for Alice remained with them, until such time as the first strangeness of their sorrow should have worn away, and Rachel's health would permit her to travel.

At first, Alice appeared to shrink from her cousin, but Rachel restored her courage, and, before long, the young girl trusted her with every secret thought which had made her happiness or trouble during the past months, growing tranquil under the tender counsels Rachel had learned to offer.

When Mr. Sherwin talked of the past, going so far back that he had only beautiful memories to recall, Alice would creep near the father and child, begging to know something also of her mother's history.

Isabel Holmes had transmitted much of her own nature to her daughter; the childlike confidence, the leaning upon the love of those about her, the fear of giving pain, and unchangeable sweetness of disposition, had all been inherited by her child.

Margaret had never been like that; she had possessed a vigorous mind, was a bold thinker, and given as much to visions as Rachel had been. The great fault of her character had been one from which Rachel was entirely free, a desire to control every one about her, and play the tyrant even with those for whom she would have made sacrifices from which other women might have shrunk.

But they were both at rest now, and Alice's wayward, hot-headed father had long left behind the errors and pains of his earthly life; those left to guard their memories could look hopefully forward to the higher existence which the three had entered, and gather a warning from the fate that had pursued him through this world.

The resolution which Rachel had formed was early communicated to her father, and with his just ideas of the sanctity of marriage, he could only resign himself, and consent to restore her to the guardianship of her blind and prejudiced husband.

The trial must have been a hard one; but he was so much accustomed to self-abnegation that he did not shrink, and Rachel looked forward to the duties before her with a patience and submission that elevated her whole nature.

Before she returned to Mr. Ward there was one promise she had made herself which must be fulfilled.

There was nothing connected with her past life of which her father was in ignorance, so when she sought him with a request that Leonard Thirstane should be sent for, he understood her intentions, and complied without hesitation.

The summons was obeyed at once; Leonard had waited anxiously for tidings from those bereaved ones, in whose sorrow he could not but feel his thoughtlessness had borne some part.

Alice did not even know that he was expected; before in any manner exciting the least anxiety in the girl's mind, Rachel wished to be certain what Thirstane's feelings were in regard to her.

She had determined, if it lay in her power, to dispel the estrangement which had sprung up between those two young hearts, and place happiness once more within their reach, since they had gained sufficient wisdom from experience to grasp it more firmly than they had done in the past months of pride and frowardness.

During their late separation and trouble, Leonard had been forced to study his own sentiments closely. Both his honour and conscience compelled him to scatter the visions which had so long blinded his sight.

He was glad to remember that he had cherished no base or unworthy passion; he could look back upon his whole acquaintance with Rachel, and find himself innocent in every word or act.

The fancy to which he had yielded was so undefined and baseless, that it had taken scarcely a shadow of human frailty; he felt that could he have been certain of Alice's affection, it would never have gained sufficient strength to have caused him a moment's pain or uneasiness.

Now, in his mind, Rachel was elevated so far above the sentiments with which he could have regarded any ordinary woman, that she appeared sacred in his eyes, and the unexplained dream which his imagination had created died out for ever.

The first person he saw when he reached the house was Mr. Sherwin, who led him, after a welcome greeting, into the library where Rachel was seated.

She looked so quiet and composed that he could hardly believe any trouble had been near her; then the sight of her mourning dress recalled at least the great loss she had so recently suffered.

There was a long and serious conversation between them, and Thirstane listened reverently to her advice, receiving with surprise, in which were mingled a thousand varied feelings, the confidence that regarded Alice.

"You are right," he said; "but until now, I never for an instant believed that she cared for me. I have been living in a dream during these past months, but your words have wakened me completely."

A single pang crossed Rachel's heart, but she checked it like an evil thought, and listened to him with no sign of emotion.

"The truth is," he said, colouring a little, "I have been weaving a sort of romance in this beautiful valley, nothing very serious, thank heaven—in fact, I am a little ashamed of myself and want to ask your pardon, if I only know how."

"What do you mean?" inquired Rachel.

Her heart was beating violently; she hoped, yet dreaded an explanation of the mysterious face which had haunted her.

He laughed somewhat confusedly; but after an instant's hesitation, went on—

"You remember one Halloween- eve which you spent in this house with Mrs. Adams?"

"Yes! I remember it well."

"I supposed that my guardian was staying here then, and came to make him a visit—to seek a reconciliation, in fact, for I had been behaving badly enough. The great hall-door was on the latch, so I entered, innocent of all mischievous intentions, do be assured, reckless as my conduct afterwards proved. I found my way to a room next the kitchen, I saw the mystic rites and overheard the conversation of those people. When you went up-stairs on that romantic pilgrimage, I committed the boyish freak of going after you into the chamber where the apparition was to make itself visible. You did not share my folly, but in spite of myself, I partook of all the sentiment which filled your imagination, was almost ready to believe the whole affair supernatural, and claimed for myself a poetic interest in you from that time. Of course I left the house, as to have discovered myself to the tenant or his wife would have spoiled the whole romance."

"It was a reality, then," said Rachel, her cheeks crimsoning, and the uppermost feeling in her mind being one of vexation. "I somewhat regret it, Mr. Thirstane; most persons, I suppose, have a vein of superstition in their natures which makes plain truth a little unpalatable. I was, indeed, a romantic girl in those days; but, fortunately, shadows seldom trouble one's happiness deeply."

Rachel was very much disturbed; to have that phantom fade into a reality so natural and commonplace annoyed her sensitive pride more than she liked to confess even to herself.

The colour came and went in her face; she was ashamed to be angry, and too much affected by that sudden overthrow of the mystery which had so long occupied her thoughts to put away her pain.

"You are displeased," said Thirstane.

Rachel's good sense came to her rescue.

"Not in the least," she replied, frankly; "I am only annoyed that anyone should know how childish I was. But there was another time—"

"Oh, yes; at your mother's house. I cannot tell what presumptuous freak or superstitious feeling induced me to go there, but certain it is that I neither wished you nor anyone to find me out. Then, again, in Mrs. Meredith's conservatory—that was the last. I returned unexpectedly, and went to see her on some business, passing through the garden, as I often did on such occasions. When I found company at the house, and especially when I caught sight of you, I retreated, absolutely afraid to confront you after so many boyish impertinences. Now that I have made a clean breast of my folly, can we be friends, Mrs. Ward, and will you promise not to condemn me and despise me altogether?"

Rachel bowed her head kindly enough, but she did not answer—she could not.

The last link, the supernatural bond which had

drawn her towards him, was severed; they were separated as completely now as though worlds had suddenly swept between them.

That she did not suffer deeply it would be false to say; that there was in her heart a thought for which she should have blushed, falser still!

The mystery had seemed to make a difference between her existence and the lives of those about her, now its romance and beauty died into something only fit for a jest; but there faded likewise every memory which could have worked her harm.

Rachel sat and watched the last dream fade into mist at her feet among the ruins of her visionary girlhood; but out of the shadow rose the real existence which lay beyond, sad, clouded for a time, perhaps, but full of fortitude and submission.

She rose quietly, motioned him to remain, and went away to seek for Alice.

She found the young girl sitting gloomily in her chamber; but a word from Rachel brought a glow of happiness to her cheek.

Rachel looked at her—she would not have been human had no bitter thought crossed her mind.

"My mother suffered for her," was the painful reflection, "and I for this child!"

Then the bitterness left her soul, and a repose, unlike any rest she had ever known, settled gently upon it.

"Come," she whispered, "Alice, come."

She led her into the library, placed her hand in that of Thirstane, and with a smile which was like a blessing upon the dawn of their new lives, left them together.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE night before their departure, Rachel and her father went down to the old farmhouse, where Ophelia still remained, to bid her farewell.

It was growing dusk, and they found her seated somewhat disconsolately over the kitchen fire.

She was very much delighted at their visit, although she stood a little in awe of Mr. Sherwin, and flurry and awkwardness for a few moments disturbed the customary self-confidence of her bearing.

"We'll have to sit in the kitchen," she said; "I s'pose 'tain't a thing your par's used to, Miss Ward—but I hain't got any fire in the room—if I'd ha' known you was coming I'd have lighted one."

"We shall be very comfortable here," replied Mr. Sherwin, having been made acquainted with her peculiarities and good-naturedly humouring them; "everything is as nice and tidy as possible."

Ophelia smiled softly, and from that moment all doubts with regard to her visitor died in her mind.

In an instant she resumed the lugubrious expression of countenance with which she thought it necessary to greet all persons who had recently suffered the loss of a friend.

"'Tain't what it used to be," she answered, shaking her head; "but I hain't no heart for anything now."

"You are not alone here?" Rachel asked, fearful that something might be said to disturb her father's composure.

"No; mar's with me; but she's just run over to Miss Miller's."

"You have lived here a long time," Mr. Sherwin said.

"Ever since Miss Ward was a little gal, sir; I was with 'em here, off and on, for a good many years—no other place'll ever be like this to me."

"Shall you stay with your mother now?" asked Rachel.

"Well, it's likely," replied Ophelia, in a confidential way, as if communicating an important secret, which she would not have revealed for the world. "I hain't been used to living out; strange people would not suit me, nor me them."

"I want, before I go away, to see you comfortably settled," Rachel said; "you were faithful and kind to my mother, you have been a good friend to me—I am very grateful to you, Ophelia."

"Now don't!" she exclaimed, twisting her face into the most ludicrous expression of distress. "Don't talk so."

"You must let me thank you," Mr. Sherwin said, "for your kindness to my poor Margaret; I know how you cared for her after Rachel's marriage, how thoughtful and kind you were—"

"I didn't half do my duty," she interrupted; "I tried to, but I'm s'ich a cross-grained piece—I can't show it when I want to do a service! I tell you I've lost the best friend I ever had—mabby we did have our little ins and outs, but I know Miss Holmes liked me, and there never was a New Year's that mar didn't get her present of a new dress, or something to make her comfortable. I tell you when I think on it, and all so sudden, I'm clear, broken-hearted—there!"

She fairly broke down, and, throwing her apron over her head, rushed into the pantry to have her burst of grief out alone.

Mr. Sherwin and Rachel sat by the fire still; she was weeping silently with her hand clasped in her father's, while he soothed her with his words of comfort and affection.

At last, Ophelia opened the pantry-door, and came back with her face red and swollen, and her hair in great disorder.

"I'm foolish," she said, "I sitters was, but I shan't go off again; it all came over me then like a thunder clap—I've made you cry, Rachel."

"It does me good," Rachel answered; "it comforts me to think how many there are that will miss my mother's kindness."

"I tell you she did a heap o' good in her quiet way," said Ophelia; "nobody know'd it, and the thing she wouldn't forgive was to have a person repeat what she'd done for 'em. Well, her troubles is over—heaven send us all as quiet as an end!"

She turned away, and began heaping wood upon the grate to hide her emotion. When the light blazed cheerful and clear through the room, she resumed her seat, saying, with a gleam of her former quaint humour:

"Roué Brainard fetched the wood, Rachel; he kind o' hangs round yet, and he's a bigger goose than ever he was."

"You have very little compassion for your suitors," Rachel answered, with a smile.

"Oh!" returned Ophelia, bristling with pleasure. "Don't make me blush. Won't you have something to eat? I never thought to ask."

They declined her hospitable offer, and Rachel said:

"We came on purpose to bid you good-bye."

"Now you ain't goin'?" she exclaimed. "Oh, dear me, I was in hopes you'd stay in the valley."

"I must go home," Rachel said, "and my father's business obliges me to live in London."

"Wal, this'll be a poor shakes of a place," returned Ophelia; "there won't be a soul left that's worth living."

"I shall come back sometimes, you know," Rachel said, plying her evident distress.

"But the old times won't," and Ophelia shook her head mournfully. "Heaven knows where I shall be, and I don't much care."

"But we care," Mr. Sherwin said, "and we wish to do everything that can make you happy."

"I'm a cross-grained creature," returned Ophelia, dolefully, "and I can't say what I feel, but Rachel knows my bark's worse than my bite."

"You are not willing to show how kind-hearted you really are," Rachel said, but Ophelia would not hear a word of it; she was determined to be overwhelmed by a sense of her short comings and errors, and especially dwelt upon that peculiar conformation of mind which she designated as "cross-grained."

"I s'pose your par means to shut up this house," she said, when she had sufficiently expatiated on her evil doings.

"We have not decided," Mr. Sherwin replied.

"I s'pose you'll have Mr. Adams with the farm along with you'n," she continued, her acuteness moving towards the divulging of a plan which had for several days worked silently in her brain.

"That must be as my daughter sees fit," Mr. Sherwin said; "this farm is hers—no one can have any control over it."

"Not even her husband?" asked Ophelia, eagerly.

"No; by her mother's will it is secured entirely to Mrs. Ward."

"You don't say that!" exclaimed Ophelia, brightening at once. "Well, that's as it ought to be."

"I want to make some arrangement, by which you can have a home here," Rachel said, "so that you and your mother will be comfortable and happy; she needs you with her now."

"That's just like you—nobody else would have thought of it," Ophelia returned, struggling between her emotion and the project which agitated her mind. "But what'll you do about the land?"

"I think we can make some arrangement by which you can live easily—"

"Oh my, I'm willin' enough to work—Miss Holmes allers allowed that, no matter what come up."

"I did not express my meaning," Rachel continued. "This house will give you a pleasant home, but you must have some means of making yourself independent. I think, if Mr. Adams works the land—"

"I could do it as well as any man in the county—there!"

After that revelation, Ophelia leaned back in her seat, waiting to hear what would come next.

"Would you like to rent it?" Rachel asked, laughing a little, but sufficiently acquainted with Ophelia's character to know that she would be quite capable of undertaking the management of the farm and carry it out also.

Ophelia hesitated, and tied her apron-strings into knots, answering somewhat doubtfully, as was often her habit when most in earnest—

"Well, there's two sides to that, you know, and enough to be said on both of 'em!"

"Let us hear what you can say upon the subject," said Mr. Sherwin, pleasantly, to whom she was a new study in the way of womanhood.

"I've been thinking," replied Ophelia, with a good deal of hesitation and more eagerness, "not that I over thought it would come to anything, or raly meant to speak of it—but a body can't help their thoughts, 'aint to be expected of 'em."

She eyed the visitors with her old sharpness; but as there was no dissent from a fact so self-evident, she gave a giggle of satisfaction, and drew herself up as erect as if she had unexpectedly been searched.

"Go on," said Mr. Sherwin; "what did you think?"

"That I'd like nothing better than to manage this very farm," returned Ophelia, boldly, plunging at once into the midst of her plan. "I know just how Miss Holmes—I can't get at the other name over—carried it on, and I could keep everything up the way she did. I ain't making no offer, don't expect to; goodness knows I ain't got much money, but this was what I thought, and 'taint any harm, no how. I've made the cheese and butter allers—I know where to sell it—I know how to hire the men."

"Would you really like to rent the farm?" Mr. Sherwin asked.

"It's just one of them things a body can't answer off hand! I've sagaciated the matter in the way I tell on, but I ain't making no proposal, ain't in no position to make none, and don't expect to be."

"I can see no objection to your taking it if you wish," said Mr. Sherwin. "I proposed to have the farm with mine; if you think you can carry on matters, I see no reason why Rachel should not have you for a tenant as well as anybody else."

"Now you ain't in earnest!" exclaimed Ophelia; "I know you ain't, and that's the end on it."

"Indeed he is, Ophelia," said Rachel; "and I shall be very glad to do it, I assure you."

Ophelia emitted a noise something between a squeal and a snort, and exclaimed:

"Well, if I don't astonish this neighbourhood I'm mistaken—they need waking up, and I'll show them what a woman can do. But can we really arrange things?"

"There is nothing to prevent it," replied Mr. Sherwin. "I have no doubt you can manage the farm as well as anybody, and Mr. Adams will always be ready to assist you in any way."

"I'm willing to be advised; I don't want to be headstrong. I tell you what it is, I can make double what Miss Holmes used to—she didn't want the bother, but I'm going to make everything count. Why mar'll go right out of her—shoes! I was laughin' about it last night, never expecting it to happen, you know, and she thought I was going crazy. But how about the house and all—let's understand each other in the start."

"At present we will let that go," said Mr. Sherwin; "live in it just as it is—we will see how rich you get before we have any question of that—Rachel will be satisfied, you may be quite certain."

Strong-minded as she was, for a few moments Ophelia was quite overcome by the magnitude and grandeur of her prospects; but before long, the honest womanliness at the bottom of her nature forced her into a gentler mood. She cried a little, and endeavoured to express her gratitude.

The matter was discussed and arranged in a manner which could not fail to be extremely advantageous to her, and as far as capability, and even practical knowledge, went, she was fully equal to the task she had undertaken.

"Ma and I can do the work in the house," she said, in answer to some remark of Rachel's; "this'll make me so young, she'll fly about like a windmill. What's more," she added, with a proper appreciation of her new dignity, "I don't want to be bothered with help—they're the plague of a body's life. The men folks will know what to expect, for they'll get kept up to the mark, just the way Miss Holmes used to do it."

"Take care that you don't find a husband among them," said Mr. Sherwin, trying not to laugh.

"There ain't the least danger," she replied, with her most stately air; "t'isn't likely that just when I've got to be a property holder, I'm going to turn bondswoman for the best of them."

"You are still young enough to make, and change that resolution a great many times."

"I ain't so old nor so young as I might be," she said, surprised into a confidence no mortal ever heard her make before or after. "I was thirty my last birthday. Well, there, I've let the cat out of the bag now—nobody ever ketches me that way afore, and they won't agin in a hurry."

"I shall be glad to know that the old home is in good hands," Rachel said; "I can always think of it as looking as it has ever since I remember it at all."

"There shan't be a stone moved—not one! You'll come and see sometimes, Rachel, won't you? There never shall be a thing done only just as Miss Holmes used to do it."

"I am certain that you will do your best always, Ophelia; I want you to be happy—remember that."

"Why, I'm set up like a queen—I wouldn't change places with Victoria this minute! I'll be lonesome here, mabby," she continued, as recollections of her dead mistress came back and cast their shadow over her delight! "I know for awhile I shall be going twenty times a day to Miss Holmes with questions—it'll be hard when I don't find her, but I shall get over that. I do believe she'd be pleased—she'd have hated to have had strangers in the old house where your grandpa lived afore her."

Before they left the dwelling, Rachel went sadly through the familiar rooms—prayed silently by the bed where her mother had died—but feeling still the serenity and calm which had lately settled upon her soul.

Ophelia bade them farewell with many thanks and tears, forgetting entirely her dignity and composure.

"I can't say what I want to, but the Lord knows I am thankful! See if I don't do well—I ain't no great scholar, but I'm good at simple 'rithmetic, and I'll risk being cheated. Do come and see me—I hain't nobody but you and ma to care for! I know I ought to keep my place more with you, but I've lived here ever since you was a little thing, and it comes nat'l to talk free—I don't mean no harm."

They parted from her at length, and she re-entered the house, of which she had so suddenly become mistress, her sorrow preventing her head from being completely turned.

The plan was really carried out. Ophelia took the farm, and as she had several hundred pounds in the bank saved from her labour, she began her new duties under the most flattering auspices, and carried them on with great success.

The happiness of her old mother was beyond all description; the pair worked with hands and hearts, and the very sight of their content would of itself have brought a gleam of peace to Rachel's heart.

(To be continued.)

THE NEW OVERLAND ROUTE TO INDIA.—Captain Tyler, R.E., of the Board of Trade, who was sent to Italy some time ago by the Post-office authorities, in order to report on the capabilities of a new route for the Indian mails and passengers, is now returned. Instead of the Indian mails being taken over Malta, they are to be conveyed directly over Brindisi, the port on the southern coast of Italy, which is about the same distance from Malta as it is from Alexandria. Mr. Fell's line over Mont Cenis, which will be entirely opened in the spring of next year, will then, until the completion of the Mont Cenis tunnel, carry the passengers and mails over the Alps, when they will be conveyed to London by the shortest and most direct route across France, thus saving one day and a half of the time now spent. It becomes doubtful whether, in the present state of the Italian finances, which will certainly not be improved by the war for the possession of Venice, the expensive Mont Cenis tunnel will be continued at all. These difficulties are at present very great; and an eye-witness states that the quartz rock now being cut to form the tunnel is so hard that fire is struck by the boring tools at each blow. The carrying of a line on Mr. Fell's plan over another of the Alpine passes would also of course enable us, in case of a war with France, to send the Indian mails over Germany.

A SINGULAR MARRIAGE.—A peculiar attempt at matrimony took place at Llangollen Parish Church a few days ago. A rumour being current that the gentleman was already married, the church was crowded. Everything was in readiness to proceed with the ceremony—the clergyman at the altar, one of the churchwardens and the parish clerk close by. Before, however, going on with the marriage service, the churchwarden interrogated the bridegroom in this wise:—"Are you not already a married man?" The bridegroom somewhat excitedly replied, "Who are you, and what business have you to question me in this place? I came here to be married, and waited long enough for it, and here is my license." "I am a churchwarden, and unless you conduct yourself properly in the house of God I have power to turn you out." A letter was then read to him, which stated that he was a married person; which, however, he denied. There was, however, no proof of a previous marriage. The marriage service was then proceeded with, and went on uninterruptedly until the placing of the rings. Clergyman: "With this ring I thee wed." Bridegroom: "With this ring I thee wed." Clergyman: "With my body I thee worship." Bridegroom: "No, indeed, I can't say that; I will worship no one but God." Upon this the clergyman closed the book and walked off to-

towards the door; but on the entreaties of the bride and bridegroom, and on his promise that he would repeat the words, the reverend gentleman kindly returned to the altar, and proceeded with the lesson; but to the surprise of all present, when he read, "With my body I thee worship," the bridegroom said as before, "I protest against it." The Bride: "Oh, do say the words." Bridegroom: "No, I cannot say such words. I protest against it." The clergyman for the second time closed the book and left the church, and the couple were obliged to return home in exactly the same relationship as they had left it, namely, unmarried. The following day, however, another effort was made to effect a union at the same altar, and with better success, the bridegroom repeating every word after the clergyman, without any objection.

FLORA TALBOT'S WEALTH.

KATE CLARENDON and Flora Talbot were cousins, and they were both orphans. Some of their friends were sure that they could see a striking family resemblance between them; while others could discover nothing of the kind.

Kate Clarendon was a beauty, and few seemed more positive of the fact than she did herself. She was tall and queenly in form, with well-rounded, graceful outlines; her face was of the pure Grecian mould; her brow was just such a brow as the old sculptors of Athens loved to give to their ideal goddesses—not too high, nor too low; and her hair was dark enough to be called black by those who are not too particular in their classification of shades.

If there was a fault in her beauty, it was in her complexion. Her skin lacked that glow which belongs to the well-organized and well-employed healthy maiden; but by the arts of dress—by the skillful arrangement of those little bits of female adornment which the educated belle knows so well how to apply, and by the selection of proper shades of colour—she managed to overcome the defect so far that none who met her only in the drawing-room would notice its existence.

And Kate Clarendon was an heiress as well as a beauty. She had inherited from her father, and now held in her own right, a fortune of something over a hundred thousand pounds; so we may well suppose that her admirers were not a few; and when we consider that she was only two-and-twenty years of age, we may believe that she had plenty of time yet in which to make a selection from her many suitors. In fact, she had already quite a number of offers for her hand, and some very good ones—so her uncle said—but she wanted more.

Flora Talbot was nearly four years younger than Kate, being only eighteen. She was not so queenly in form, and she had not the pure Grecian outline of feature.

In fact, it would have been difficult to have likened Flora's beauty to any particular type; but that she possessed beauty none pretended to deny.

Her chin was rather more prominent than was her cousin's, and there was a dimple in its centre. Her cheeks were fuller and rounder; her nose was thicker; her eyes were larger, and set farther apart; her brow was higher; and her hair was so dark.

But then Flora's skin was so fresh and pure, and so ruddy, that its colour took care of itself; and as for adornment she depended only upon her simple, happy heart, which lent an almost continuous smile to the cheerful face—a smile that played around the dimples of her cheeks and chin and danced in the merry light of her soft blue eyes.

But Flora Talbot was not an heiress. Her father had been a poor, hard-working man, and had left her, his only child, with barely enough to secure to her a good education. Her mother died after her father, and then she went to live with her Uncle Robert.

Robert Wallace was a genial old man of three-score—a retired naval officer on half-pay; owning a fine old mansion which his father had owned before him; and receiving income enough, from his pay, and from some good and safe investment, to allow him to live according to his own tastes.

The nearest relatives he had in the world were his two nieces, and he loved them both, as he had loved their mothers before them. And yet there was a shade of difference in the tone of the memories which he held of his two dead sisters.

His oldest sister, who became the wife of the rich merchant, Mark Clarendon, visited him but seldom after she was married. She had too much to attend to in the fashionable circles of the metropolis, and seemed to forget the friends of other days.

But his younger sister had lived near him—had been a sister while she lived—had given her darling Flora into his care—and had blessed him with her last breath of earth.

Was it not possible that something of these old

memories held influence over the love which he bore his nieces?

He tried to make himself believe that there could be nothing of the kind. And perhaps there was not. The influence may have been all in the present.

Whose arms were oftenest around his neck; and whose soft, warm lips oftenest pressed his own; and whose tender hand gently smoothed his brow when he was in pain; and whose sweet voice was it that so often said, "Heaven bless you, dear uncle, for all your goodness to me?" Ah, whose was it?

"Darling, come and sit beside me. Do you know how much you look like your mother?"

And Flora went to her old place, and put her arm around her uncle's neck, and rested her head upon his bosom, and asked him to tell her of his adventures on the wide ocean.

That was not Kate's place. She never sought it. And yet she loved her uncle in her way—for how could she help loving so good a man—but she loved herself more.

And there was one other difference which may have had some influence with Uncle Robert. Until he had received that ugly wound by a poisoned arrow on the coast of New Zealand, his life had been one of constant and untiring activity, and even now he was seldom idle.

Kate Clarendon, with wealth at her command, did little else than lounge in the parlour and entertain select company; and even that "little else" was taken up in attending to matters of dress.

But Flora Talbot, who felt that her future well depended almost entirely upon her own exertions, had no inclination to be idle. Her uncle often urged her to take more time for pleasure; but she assured him that she found most pleasure in making herself useful.

"Kate," she was wont to say, "has no need to work; but it would be wicked for me to be idle. Were I to bide now, I should be sowing the seed of wrong that could not yield me else than a harvest of sorrow in the years to come."

Then Uncle Robert would kiss his pet, and she would hie away to her work—perhaps to the kitchen to direct the cook; perhaps to the chambers, to see that all was neat and tidy there; or may be she would take the low seat by her uncle's side, where she would ply her needle while he told her the old stories over again.

And then, when the old man had talked till he was tired, Flora would take her seat at the pianoforte and play and sing.

One evening, while Flora was thus entertaining her uncle, one of the servants came in and announced Mr. Chester; and before she could leave the instrument the visitor had entered.

"Ah, Dick, I'm glad to see you," was Uncle Robert's hearty word of welcome. "Egad, you're just in time for the music.—No, no, my pet," he continued, as his niece arose from the pianoforte and turned towards the door; "you must not haul off in that fashion."

"Let me add my request," said Mr. Chester, with a warm, eloquent smile.

"Tell her you'll sing with her, Dick, and I know she'll stop."

"I shall be too happy, if Miss Talbot will permit me. But we'll rest first, and you shall both hear the news."

The visitor took a seat which Flora had moved forward for him, and then continued:

"You must congratulate me, Captain Wallace—and so must you, Miss Talbot."

"Eh?" cried the old man, with a show of deepest interest. "Have you weathered the point, Dick? Have you gained the case?"

"Yes, sir. I closed my argument this forenoon. The judge ruled strongly against me—as strongly as he dared to—and as I knew he would, seeing where his sympathies must lie; but the jury were only out fifteen minutes, when they returned with a verdict in favour of my client. So the Coleman children come in for their full share of their grandfather's property, while the scheming widow and her unscrupulous son are left just where the old man meant they should be left. In truth, captain, it has been a tough case, and I have worked hard at it; but I have had my reward."

And then the visitor went on and gave his host an account of some of the obstacles he had had to contend with; and while he was thus engaged, Flora Talbot regarded him with a look of something more than mere interest in the story he was telling.

There was a warm, varying light in her soft, blue eyes; a perceptible heaving of the bosom; an ever-changing colour in her face; and a restless movement of the folded hands, that might have led a close observer to suspect that the maiden's interest was deep and abiding.

Richard Chester was a young man of four-and-twenty; tall and perfectly formed; with a face of

more than ordinary intellectual beauty; a brow broad and full, about which clustered a rich mass of dark brown curls; and possessing a voice of rare tone and volume.

He had been practising as an attorney only two years, and yet there were few lawyers in that section who were his superiors. He was entirely a self-made man, his parents having left him wholly dependant upon his own exertions while yet a boy; and what of manhood he possessed was pure and honourable.

His father had been a schoolmate and playmate of Robert Wallace in the days of his boyhood, and since the old captain had retired from the service, he had taken considerable interest in the welfare of the youth.

At first Richard had not taken much social advantage of Wallace's proffers of friendship; but of late, since his reputation had become established, and the incoming of good round fees had enabled him to open a bank account, he had been quite free in visiting at the house of the genial old sailor.

"Well, well, my boy," cried Uncle Robert, after he had heard the story of the case, "you're on the right course, and if your life is spared you'll make a glorious voyage of it. But come—now let us have some music. It isn't often that I can catch you and Flora together. Give us one of those jolly songs. You know what I like."

Flora sat down at the pianoforte, and opened the book. At first she trembled so that her voice did not sound at all natural; and it was not until the old man had cried, "Pipe it out, my pet!" that she sang like herself.

A rare, sweet face had Flora Talbot, and a voice of richest tone and wonderful compass had Richard Chester; and when we consider the fact that Flora had few superiors as a performer, we shall easily understand that Uncle Robert's delight was entirely unaffected.

By and by Kate Clarendon entered the room, and having received Mr. Chester's greeting in an easy, *en fait* manner peculiar to herself, she excused her absence by explaining that she had just returned from a visit to a neighbour. And then, as though the young man were a piece of property belonging exclusively to herself, she monopolized his attention by requesting to know all about the great will case he had just gained.

Flora remained just long enough so that her departure should not seem hasty, and then went away to her own room, where she sat for more than an hour by an open window, gazing out into the dim, starlit space; and during most of that time she sat with both her hands pressed upon her bosom, as though her heart needed restraint from its throbbings; and when, finally, she sought her pillow, she prayed to heaven for strength to support her through whatever of trial she might be destined to endure.

And after this the days came and went. Richard Chester was a frequent visitor, and by Uncle Robert he was always warmly welcomed. Sometimes he sang with Flora, and talked with her of books, and of history, and of art; but Kate was sure to claim most of his attention, and Flora was sure to flee as soon as she could do so without appearing rude or unkind.

Alas, poor Flora! She had sense enough to know that she loved Richard Chester. It was no mystic, unknown emotion that possessed her heart, and troubled the current of her being.

There was something exquisitely sweet in sitting at the pianoforte, with his rich voice mingling with her own; there was something enrapturing in the softly and honestly spoken words of approbation that fell from his lips; and when, as it sometimes happened, he found her alone, and seemed anxious to keep her near him, joy ruled the blessed moments.

But there were other seasons—long, long hours—when the gloom of utter sadness fell upon her, and she could only wish that she had never seen Richard Chester.

And why should she think of him? Why had she allowed herself to love him? Why had he been so kind to her? And the more she tried to convince herself that it was all very foolish, the deeper grew the passion that she could not control.

"Flora," said Kate Clarendon, as the two cousins sat together in the drawing-room one afternoon—the latter with a new novel in her hand, and the former with her sewing—"I have almost made up my mind to accept the hand of Richard Chester."

A sudden pallor overspread Flora's face, and her hands trembled so that she could with difficulty guide her needle; but she had strength of will enough to subdue the emotion before her cousin observed it.

"He is not rich," pursued Kate, after a pause; "but he may become so if he keeps on as he has begun."

"You have wealth enough for both," suggested Flora.

"Perhaps I have; but that is not exactly the thing. The possession of wealth gives standing in society; and, after all, the world sets its seal of approbation

upon those who are above the need of common drudgery."

Flora knew that her cousin meant no reflection upon herself, so she took no offence at this unjust remark; nor did she care to enter into any argument to refute the falsehood involved in the proposition.

"I rather like Richard," Miss Clarendon went on, "and I think he is destined to become a noted and popular man. I have no doubt that some people will wonder when they know that I have accepted him; but I might do worse."

"Has Mr. Chester proposed?" asked Flora, with just a slight tinge of tremulousness in her voice.

"Oh, bless your dear, simple soul, I haven't allowed him to do that yet. I know that he has been anxious to do so many times; but I have held him off. I have only to give him the opportunity, and he will fall upon his knees in a moment. I declare I can't help thinking that it is quite a conquest. Only think of it: the man who has moved multitudes of strong men by his eloquence to kneel at my feet! I may allow him to plead awhile, just to see how he will do it—to see if he will be particularly eloquent; but I have about made up my mind that his plea shall be successful in the end. So, my dear Flora, you need not be at all surprised if, ere long, your rich cousin, who has come off conqueror so many times, should surrender to the young lawyer."

With a dull, heavy pain at her heart, Flora Talbot sought her chamber; and when she came to the tea-table in the evening her uncle was anxious to know what ailed her. She told him that her head ached; and she told him the truth.

A few evenings after that Richard Chester called, and found Uncle Robert and Flora together in the drawing-room. Flora had resolved that she would avoid him in future, but she could not well leave him then; and when he had taken a seat by her side, and commenced to talk with her of a book he had been reading at her suggestion, she forgot the resolve, and for a brief season the old colour came back to her face, and a warm light beamed in her eyes.

At length Kate came in, and while Mr. Chester was returning her greeting Flora arose and left the room.

It was a bright, moonlight evening, and the maiden threw a light mantle over her shoulders and walked out into the garden, and there, half an hour afterwards, her uncle found her sitting beneath the canopy of a trellised grape-vine.

"Flora, why are you out here alone?"

"I—I wish to be alone, dear Uncle."

"You are not well, my pet."

"Not very well."

"And you have been crying."

Flora tried to speak, but either her voice failed her, or she knew not what to say; so she allowed her uncle to draw her upon his bosom, and there she fell to weeping afresh.

"Oh, my poor, dear child!" cried the old man. "I ought to be cashiered for my blindness. I never so much as suspected the truth till this evening. But when I saw you, an hour ago, by Richard's side, and saw how the colour came back to your cheeks, and how the light danced in your eyes, and how all the signs of illness were swept away, I began to think. And then when you got up to go out, after Kate came in, and I saw the old pallor and pain-marks come back, just as sudden gloom comes from the sweeping of a dark cloud over the face of the sun, then I knew the whole. My blessed pet, am I not right? Trust your uncle."

And with many sobs and many tears the poor girl confessed the truth; and then she begged of her uncle that he would allow her to go away for a while.

"Oh," she cried, "I know that Kate will want me to help her in preparing for her marriage, and I think it would kill me! Let me go away until after that."

But Uncle Robert would give no promise then. He wanted time to think. Said he, after he had started to lead his pet towards the house:

"I must know when Richard thinks of getting married, and if it be not soon, I may find some means of sending Kate away to make her preparations. But we will think of it. My soul! I should be lonesome indeed without my darling."

They walked on a little way in silence, and then the old man continued, as though speaking with himself:

"How very strange it is that I never thought of this! And to think how I have urged them to sing together, and how I have tried to keep my pet by his side just to hear them talk! Alas! my darling, I have done much wrong!"

"No, no, dear uncle! Oh, no, not you. Say not so."

And even while she tried to cheer her kind guardian, there was a tone of sadness in her voice and in her face which she could not overcome.

On the following morning Kate informed her cousin and her uncle that Mr. Chester was going away to attend to a law-case, and would be gone a week, and perhaps longer.

And during that week Uncle Robert carried a heavy load upon his thoughts and upon his heart. He saw too plainly that his pet was suffering.

The warm smile seldom wreathed the dimples of her cheeks; the light of her eye grew dim and melancholy; the colour faded from her cheeks; and the happy song that had been wont to gladden the spirit of the old captain was hushed.

One evening, just as the lamps had been lighted in the drawing-room, and while Flora sat by her uncle's side, making ready to read to him from a newspaper, a footfall was heard upon the front steps, and directly afterwards the door-bell was rung.

"It is Mr. Chester," cried Flora, starting up.

"I am glad he has come," said the old man, "and you may go, my pet, for I wish to see him alone."

There were two doors opening into the hall from the long drawing-room, and as the visitor would enter by the one nearest the vestibule, Flora started to leave by the other; but when she tried to open it she found it fast upon the outside.

The servant must have accidentally turned the key while cleaning the knob. Mr. Chester was already in the hall, and there was but one other way of egress, and that was by the rear window out upon the balcony.

This was a deep bay-window, with heavy damask curtains reaching from the cornice to the floor. She quickly drew the curtain and slipped into the alcove, and here she found herself a prisoner, for the sash resisted all her efforts to raise it, and before she could seek another mode of egress, the visitor had entered the drawing-room.

If she could have collected her thoughts in season, she would have come forth and excused herself in a proper way, but before she could think what she should do, her uncle had conducted the young lawyer to a seat, and with fear and trembling, she sank down upon a low stool which chanced to stand against the window frame.

It was an unpleasant position, for the two men were seated very near to her place of concealment, and she could not help hearing all they said, but she dared not move. It was too late now to regret the loss of her presence of mind, and she could only sit quietly where she was, trusting that her unwilling proximity might not be discovered.

Uncle Robert and his guest conversed awhile upon matters of common interest, but there was not that warmth and freedom which generally characterized their conversation.

The old man certainly had something upon his mind entirely foreign to the subjects of their converse, and even Mr. Chester's thoughts seemed to dwell upon a subject far removed from the themes he had introduced.

Finally there came a pause, and when it had lasted so long that the silence became awkward, Uncle Robert, with a perceptible effort to hold his nerves in place, began to speak his mind.

"Dick Chester," he said, "I have something of a delicate nature to say to you, and as it must be said, I am going to out with it, and speak so that you will understand me. I am well aware that it was simply to see me, and that, too, on professional business in part, that you first became familiar and intimate here."

"You are right, sir," replied Mr. Chester.

His voice was low and tremulous, and his nether lip trembled.

"But," pursued the captain, "you have of late had another attraction to my house. Am I not right?"

"You are right, Mr. Wallace."

"You love my niece?"

Richard Chester involuntarily clasped his hands upon his knees, and for a moment his head was bowed. But presently overcoming his tremulousness, and looking up with an expression of manly frankness, he said:

"My good friend, you have spoken the truth. I do love your niece—I love her with all the love my heart and soul can feel—and I should have spoken with you upon the subject ere this, but—but—I have allowed myself to fear that you might find objections—"

"Objections, Dick! What objections could I have possibly raised against you?"

"Not against me. I did not exactly think that. But I feared you might regard the match, at the present time, as rather unequal."

"Tut, tut, my boy. I could not have thought that. I know your honourable and generous nature too well. No, no—I could never think that any mercenary motives could influence you. I give you my word that the thought of your seeking my niece's wealth never entered my mind. But I have reasons for wishing that the matter may be brought to a termination as soon as may be. You have not yet mentioned the subject directly to her?"

Chester looked into the old man's face with a sort of vacant, wondering stare.

"Mentioned it?" he repeated, absently. "Of course not."

"But you think she would not refuse you?"

"I don't know."

"Then let me advise you to find out as speedily as possible."

"But, Mr. Wallace, you spoke of your niece's wealth."

"Certainly. She is her own mistress, and holds her property in her own right; and I think she is to-day the owner of a hundred and fifty thousand pounds."

Richard Chester sat like one in a dream.

"Bless your soul, my dear boy!" cried the old man, thinking that he could detect the cause of the lover's strange manner, "you have nothing to fear. Touching the depth of Kate's love, that remains for you to determine; but I think I may venture to promise that she will not refuse you."

"KATE! KATE'S LOVE!" pronounced Richard, as though he were having a troublesome awakening from his dream.

"Why, bless me! what are you talking about, Dick? You surely wouldn't seek her hand without her love."

"Kate—Kate! Do you speak of Miss Clarendon?"

"Of whom should I speak?"

Richard Chester started up from his chair and then sat down again.

Half a dozen half-formed ejaculations dropped from his lips.

First, he seemed astonished; then, as the truth worked its way to his mind, a look of stupefaction followed; but finally the full light of intelligence broke over his handsome face, and placing his hand upon the old man's arm, he said:

"Captain Wallace, have you supposed that I sought or cared for the love or the hand of Kate Clarendon?"

It was now Uncle Robert's turn to be astonished.

"Eh? What d'ye mean? Isn't it Kate you've been after?"

The young man spoke promptly and soberly:

"My dear captain, since you have so misunderstood me, and since circumstances have given you some cause for such misunderstanding, I shall speak plainly, trusting that you will not repeat my words to other ears. In Miss Clarendon I have discovered nothing attractive to me. She is not the woman I should seek for a wife; and as for her wealth, I do not want it; or, at all events, there is not material wealth enough in the world to blind me to the holy worth of that soul-wealth—that spiritual possession—which is above all price. Miss Clarendon has puzzled me, and sorely embarrassed me—Remember, sir, I am speaking now in confidence to you—When I first came here she sought my company, and I could not have repulsed her without rudeness, and from that time to the present she has seemed to take it for granted that my time, while here, belonged to her. At any rate, she has taken it and so appropriated it. I have never knowingly or intentionally sought her society; but she has given me her presence as though she deemed it not only her duty to entertain me, but as though there was no one else who could do it as well."

"Uncle Robert, the first time I saw Flora Talbot my soul received the impress of a sun-picture, which I shall carry with me through life. I saw her again and again; I heard her sweet voice; I felt the influence of her bright smile; I caught the inspiration of her pure and noble spirit; and I loved her with the whole strength and ardour of a first and all-absorbing love. To claim her as my own—to cherish and protect her—to hold her to my bosom as wholly and entirely mine, as a better part of myself—and to know that she loved me, and me alone—has grown to be my dearest wish, and the subject of my most earnest prayer.—Hark! there is some one at the window."

"It is nothing," said the old man. "It is only the wind.—My son! and so it's my little Pet that you have been loving?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what did you think could render such a match unequal?"

"Our ages, sir. She is only eighteen."

"And you have reached the wonderful age of one-score-and-four years!"

"It was not that I was old, but Flora seemed, in her laughing glee, and in her childlike innocence of joy, to be one that still needed care and guidance, and I thought that you might hesitate to relinquish the blessed charge into other hands than your own. But if you hold such a thought, you do not know how kind and loving I could be, nor how I could bend every energy and aim of life to her good. Oh, sir, it is Flora Talbot's wealth that I have sought—that wealth which alone can give joy and satisfaction to the husband, and bring the sunshine of peace and comfort to the altar of home. Hers is a wealth which time cannot corrupt, and which remorse cannot

waste or dissipate—a wealth which can make joyous this life, and lend the light of hope to the life which is to come. It may be that I have been at fault in not speaking thus before; but really the opportunity has not been given. I have never supposed that Miss Clarendon regarded me in the light of a suitor; and if I have ever seemed to prefer her society to that of her cousin, it has been because the latter has been denied me, while the former has been—"

"Forced upon you!" cried the old man, as Richard hesitated. "Egad! I begin to see it, Dick."

"And," said Chester, gaining hope from the captain's beaming look, "you would not refuse me if I asked your permission to offer my hand to Flora?"

"But do you think she loves you?"

"I don't know. I hope she does. Oh, if she could know how I have prayed to heaven that her love might be mine—if she could know how wholly and entirely this poor heart is all her own—I think she will love me—I think she will."

"Why, bless your soul, Dick! if I had a mind to tattle—if I chose to tell all the secrets that— Eh! There is somebody at that window."

A low, convulsive sob sounded from the alcove, and both the men started for the spot.

"What! Pet! This you?"

Upon her uncle's bosom, sobbing and weeping, Flora rested her head.

"Bless me, darling, how is this? I thought you had gone out."

"Oh—let me go now! It was a cruel accident. I cannot explain. I could not help it."

Richard Chester took her hand, and drew her towards him.

"Flora," he said, "if you have heard the words which I have this evening spoken, you can answer me now. Oh, let not the blessed hope be blasted! What secret is it that your uncle could tell me if he would?"

Flora did not look up—she did not speak; she only nestled closely upon his bosom, as though on all the earth she wished no happier resting-place.

On the following day Uncle Robert informed Kate Clarendon that Mr. Chester had proposed for the hand of Flora, and that the proposition had been accepted.

At first Kate was incredulous; then she was very angry; and finally she went away and wept with rage and mortification.

But her ill-feelings were not of long duration. She had not really loved the young lawyer, and ere many days she met him with the same freedom and warmth of welcome as before; and if she felt a momentary pang of chagrin in view of the loss of a lover whom she had never won, she took to herself the flattering consolation that she was not yet forced to wear the circumscribing shackles of Cupid.

Flora Talbot could never exactly describe the emotions and sensations that in turn possessed her soul while she was shut in, on that eventful evening, behind the curtains of the alcove; but she could tell that there were thrills of joy of such power and electric force as to almost deprive her, for the time, of sense and reason. Had it not been so she would never have given that unlucky note of alarm which attracted her uncle and his guest to her involuntary place of retreat.

No, no,—Flora was not too young to be married; and Uncle Robert did not object to giving her in charge to Dick Chester; though he gave his consent to the arrangement with the express understanding that his Pet should not be taken away from him.

"If you will come here, and make this your home," he said to the applicant, "you may have my precious Pet for a wife; but if you propose to take her away from me while I live I shall look her up, and send you off empty-handed."

It is enough for us to say that the Pet was not locked up, and that Dick was not sent away empty-handed.

S. O. J.

FOOLHARDINESS.—A young man named Seaver, on a wager of 100 pounds, walked in Portsmouth 100 miles in as many consecutive hours, without sleep. At the close of the first 24 hours, he was very weary, and felt a stronger disposition to sleep than he afterwards experienced. It was driven off, but the result was a severe headache during the remaining days; on those days he was drowsy, but so excited (probably from the strong tea which was his only beverage) that he could sit down without danger of napping. On the third day his head was bandaged, and he stumbled much from weakness and weariness. On the fourth day it was necessary to support him as he went his hourly round. More than once he fainted and fell. In every one of the last four hours he was bathed all over with rum and alum. When he had dragged his limbs round the hall for the last time he was placed in bed, but it was considered prudent to

awake him every hour, and he was under such strong nervous excitement that at times he had to be held in bed. He says no money would induce him to make the effort again. The feat was performed in California a few years since. In Baltimore it was attempted by a man who died in the 97th hour.

THE SCIENCE OF KISSING.

PEOPLE will kiss yet not one in a hundred know how to extract bliss from lovely lips any more than they know how to make diamonds from charcoal.

And yet it is easy, at least for us. First know whom you are going to kiss. Don't make a mistake, although a mistake may be good. Don't jump like a trout for a fly, and smack a good woman on the neck, on the ear, on the corner of her forehead, or on the end of her nose, or knock off her waterfall.

The gentleman should be a little the taller. He should have a clean face, a kind eye, and a mouth full of expression. Don't kiss everybody. Don't sit down to it; stand up. Need not be anxious about getting in a crowd. Two persons are plenty to corner, and catch a kiss; more persons would spoil the sport. Take the left hand of the lady in your right; let your hat go to—any place out of the way; throw the left hand gently over the shoulder of the lady, and let it fall down the right side, towards the belt. Don't be in a hurry; draw her gently, lovingly to your heart. Her head will fall lightly upon your shoulder—and a handsome shoulder-strap it makes.

Don't be in a hurry; send a little life down your left arm. Her left hand is in your right; let there be an impression to that, not like the grip of a vice, but a gentle clasp, full of electricity, thought, and respect. Don't be in a hurry. Her head lies carelessly on your shoulder. You are nearly heart to heart. Look down into her half-closed eyes. Gently, yet manfully, press her to your bosom. Stand firm. Be brave, but don't be in a hurry.

Her lips are almost open. Lean slightly forward with your head, not the body. Take good aim; the lips meet; the eyes close; the heart opens; the soul rides the storm, troubles, and sorrows of life (don't be in a hurry); heaven opens before you; the world shoots under your feet, as a meteor, flashes across the evening sky (don't be afraid); the nervous dance before the just-erected altar of love, as zephyrs dance with the dew-trimmed flowers; the heart forgets its bitterness, and the art of kissing is learned. No fuss, no noise, no fluttering and squirming like hook-impaired worms. Kissing don't hurt; it don't require a brass band to make it legal.

VIVIAN TRAVERS.

CHAPTER VIII.

He found no one in the drawing-room, and, on questioning a servant, learned that Mr. and Mrs. Travers were indisposed, and that Vivian was in attendance upon them.

He then sauntered into the library, finding there Philip Aynsourt, who had but recently returned from his visit to his eccentric relative.

The secretary was busily engaged upon his historical work, but on Lorimer's entrance he laid it aside to entertain the family guest.

The hours passed in friendly converse until dinner, when the young gentlemen met at the table Mr. and Mrs. Travers, who looked pale and disturbed, but exerted themselves to be agreeable, and Vivian seconded their efforts by making lively remarks and amusing sallies.

Her gaiety was infectious, not even Lorimer being able to resist it, and the young girl had the pleasure of soon seeing the shadows depart from the faces of her parents, and their demeanour become more cheerful.

The evening passed pleasantly in the drawing-room, where the air was heavy with the fragrance breathed from the adjoining conservatory, and light and music lent their charms. Vivian played upon the grand piano, and Philip Aynsourt's voice joined hers in singing—much to the chagrin of Lorimer, who inwardly vowed that this should be their last duet together.

At a comparatively early hour Vivian withdrew, and Mrs. Travers soon followed her. Lorimer was the next to retire, and the secretary was then left alone with his employer.

There was an embarrassing pause, which Aynsourt at length broke, in a voice not altogether free from tremulousness:

"I have a communication to make to you, Mr. Travers, but I hardly know how to enter upon it—"

"Is it concerning my daughter, Philip?" asked Mr. Travers. Kindly, as the secretary paused.

"It is, sir," responded Philip, with considerable

agitation. "It will not seem strange to you, who know so well her lovely and generous character; that I should love Vivian; despite the great disparity in our social positions. I know that she can choose from among a large number of wealthy and distinguished suitors, and I may appear presumptuous in asking you to sanction my addresses to her—"

"No, not presumptuous, Philip. You come of a family as good as mine; your father was my college friend; and I know you to be brave, sincere, and as true as steel. Have you spoken to Vivian?"

Philip answered by relating the scene of the morning.

"Then the child returns your love!" exclaimed Mr. Travers, in a tone of gratification. "I am pleased, Philip—pleased and happy! I know no one whom I would like better for a son-in-law, although I frankly own it never occurred to my mind until to-day, that your love for my daughter was other than fraternal."

He extended his hand to the secretary, who grasped it warmly, overjoyed at the unexpected reception of his confession.

We need not linger upon the details of the interview. Suffice it to say that no father could have been kinder to Philip than was Mr. Travers, who welcomed the secretary as his son, quite forgetful of the rival claims of Lorimer.

"You will always live with us, Philip," said Mr. Travers. "I shall give Vivian a handsome marriage portion, and at my death, and that of my dear wife, all I have will revert to her. I look forward to a retirement from public life, when I hope we shall spend many happy years together."

"But I am poor," suggested Philip. "Vivian is willing to wait until I have brought out my history, which I hope will bring me at least a competence and reasonable fame."

"There is no need of waiting so long, my dear boy. We return to Eikland in June, and you and Vivian may be married early in the autumn. Vivian will have wealth sufficient for you both—at least till your book brings you money, since you seem so anxious to be independent—and you and I can continue our present relations until that period."

Philip expressed his thanks warmly, promising to cherish Vivian with all his heart and soul, and to regard her parents as his own.

There were tears in Mr. Travers's eyes as he listened to this declaration, and he again clasped Philip's hand with fatherly kindness.

No one knew better than Mr. Travers the noble soul and manly heart of the secretary. He knew him to be free from all the petty vices that disgrace so many of the youth of the present generation; to be thoroughly upright in the smallest, as in the greatest of his dealings; to be gentle, yet brave; and to be sincere, conscientious, and of scrupulous integrity.

Such men are rare, as Mr. Travers knew, and he welcomed him as his son with earnestness and affection, promising that Mrs. Travers would be equally delighted at her daughter's choice.

With happy hearts, the two gentlemen finally separated for the night.

While this scene had been transpiring, a no less pleasant one had occurred in Vivian's apartment.

On leaving the drawing-room, Mrs. Travers had proceeded to her daughter's room, finding Vivian in her bed-chamber. The young girl had arrayed herself for the night in a flowing cambric robe, brushed out her curls, and was seated, at the moment of her mother's appearance, in a luxurious arm-chair in front of her pleasant fire.

It was Mrs. Travers's custom to visit Vivian nightly before retiring to her own couch, and to discuss with her the events of the day, thus over-keeping her daughter upon the most intimate and confidential relations with her.

On this particular evening, however, Vivian seemed shy and timid, under the weight of her happy secrets, and Mrs. Travers was depressed, on account of the visit of Mrs. Hawkers and the unpleasant memories it had aroused.

She loved Vivian with the tenderest, most passionate love of which a mother is capable, and had completely lost sight of the fact that she had adopted her from another home.

Having soon heard nothing of Mrs. Hawkers for sixteen years, she had ventured to hope that the woman would never again cross her path.

And now, in the moment of her greatest fancied security from her claims, Mrs. Hawkers had made her appearance, disturbing the serenity of her life, and, worst of all, awaking the bitter consciousness that she had no legal claim to the child she had nourished, taught, and yearned over, and grown to idolize.

She accepted the arm-chair from which Vivian arose, and took the young girl in her arms, caressing her tenderly, yet sadly.

As she gazed upon the maiden's features, she thought with bitter pangs:

"Nature should have given her to me!" The child

I once bore, and who died, was never half as dear to me as my precious Vivian! She has my features and the noblest of qualities! How can she have been born of Mrs. Hawkers and her profligate husband? I cannot understand it. I can only feel that she should be mine!"

For some time she indulged in thoughts like these, and struggled with a presentiment that Mrs. Hawkers' appearance was but the herald of greater sorrows; but at length, assuming a cheerfulness she could not feel, she said:

"You have been very lonely to-day, have you not, darling?"

"Lonely, dear mamma? Oh, no! I have grieved and worried because you and papa were ill, and I am very glad that you are so much better to-night. But I have not been lonely. Oh! mamma, I have a secret," and Vivian nestled her face against her mother's bosom. "Some one loves me!"

"Not Percy Lorimer?" exclaimed Mrs. Travers, quickly, clasping the young girl closer.

"Cousin Percy?" returned Vivian, with an accent of surprise. "No, not Percy. Oh, can't you guess, mamma? It is Philip!"

"Thank heaven!" breathed Mrs. Travers, with a sigh of relief. "I knew, long ago, darling, that Philip loved you; but I was not certain that you loved him in return, or that you knew your own heart. Are you sure you love him?"

Vivian replied by blushes and silence; but her mother did not fail to read her heart aright, and hastened to bestow her unqualified approval upon her choice, and promised to communicate Vivian's secret to her papa that very night.

"Philip is telling papa now, I dare say," responded the young girl. "Cousin Percy went up-stairs a few minutes ago, and Philip has seized the opportunity to break the news to papa."

"Your papa will not refuse his consent, I am sure, my daughter. He will talk with you in the morning about it."

Vivian was content with this promise, and unfolded all the plans and hopes of her innocent heart, wondering once or twice at the sudden passion of the caresses her mother lavished upon her.

At length, when Mr. Travers's steps were heard on the stairs, Mrs. Travers tucked her daughter snugly into the downy bed, bestowed final caresses upon her, and left her to her pure dreams.

Though seated in his room Percy Lorimer was aware that a general confidence had been established between the young lovers and Mr. and Mrs. Travers; but the thought did not disturb him in the least.

"Vivian shall be happy to-night in thinking of Ayns court," he muttered; "but after to-morrow, my image will reign supreme in her soul. Twenty-four hours will bring a change over the spirit of her dream."

CHAPTER IX.

On the morning subsequent to the events recorded in the preceding chapters, Philip Ayns court was summoned to Mrs. Travers's boudoir, where Drayton and his wife awaited his appearance. He was welcomed by both as a beloved son, and received their formal consent to his engagement with Vivian.

The fact of Vivian's adoption was not mentioned by husband or wife, for neither felt it possible to own that she was not their child by blood as by affection.

When this interview came to an end, Philip was at liberty to seek his betrothed, and exchange with her the lovers' vows which had now been sanctioned by her parents.

He found her in the conservatory, trifling with a handful of flowers. She welcomed him with a blush and a smile, making room for him on the seat beside her, which he hastened to occupy.

The morning wore away in that genial, perfumed retreat, and Philip at last aroused himself to remember that an important letter needed an immediate reply, and he withdrew to write it.

He had scarcely disappeared when Percy Lorimer entered the conservatory.

He approached Vivian with a frank smile, plucking a few blossoms as he passed along the fragrant alley, and he handed them to her, saying:

"You look more like a being of romance or poetry than of real life, Miss Vivian. Are you building air-castles?"

The maiden started from the pleasant day-dream in which she had been momentarily indulging, and answered, lightly:

"I was thinking, Cousin Percy, how very happy I am, and how pleasant and sweet life is opening up before me. I do not see why I should be so blest," and her voice became tremulous in its earnestness. "I have never had a sorrow, never known the slightest privation, never been denied a wish, and have been guarded and cherished with the tenderest love all my

life long. I wonder if I shall always be so happy! I wonder if there will ever come a change!"

These remarks, and the tones in which they were uttered, almost decided Lorimer to forego the evil purpose he had entered upon, but he quickly overcame his indecision, strengthening his determination to make her his wife.

Her sweet seriousness but enhanced her glorious beauty, and Lorimer found it in his heart to worship her as the embodiment of all purity, goodness, and wisdom.

He felt it impossible to give her up to Ayns court, and allow her to walk an undclouded path, and he registered a vow in his inmost soul that, whatever the suffering to her, she should yet become his bride.

"Why, what change can ever come over your life to obscure its brightness?" he asked, with pretended surprise. "Let me be a prophet, Miss Vivian, and I will foretell all beautiful and pleasant things of your future. Your life shall always be sunny and joyful; all the blessings wealth can purchase will ever be at your service; your parents will always regard you with undiminished love; society will always adore you as the most charming of beings, and there will never come an hour when you will feel desolate and friendless."

"What a strange prophecy, Cousin Percy!" exclaimed Vivian, with an involuntary shiver. "Why should you say that my parents' love will never fail me? There is no possibility that it could, since I am their only child, and a part of themselves. And the rest of the prophecy is very dismal."

"Forgive me, Cousin Vivian, if my prophecy did not sound pleasantly. My heart was all right. Short as has been our acquaintance, my dearest wishes are for your happiness. Would that I might devote my life to the task of keeping your existence joyous, undclouded!"

His tone was earnest and impassioned, and he bent over her, quite forgetful for the moment of everything but his love for her.

"Oh, Vivian!" he continued, disregarding her look of surprise, "the story that I would tell you has been made familiar to you by other lips than mine, but I cannot help hoping that you will regard it more favourably when told by me. I love you, Vivian—love you more than all the world beside. Your beauty, wit, and grace have captivated my soul!"

"Hush, Cousin Percy," interrupted Vivian, gently and gravely. "You surprise me. I had no idea that you regarded me with other than cousinly affection. I look upon you as a cousin or brother, but not with the love you desire."

"But, Vivian, that love may come in time, when I shall have proved my devotion!"

"Stop, Cousin Percy! I have no right to listen to those words," exclaimed the maiden, in a tone of distress. "I am already a promised wife!"

"Promised? To Philip Ayns court?"

Vivian bowed silently.

"And my cousin, your father, does he know and approve this engagement?"

Vivian again bowed.

Lorimer was tempted in his anger and disappointment—for, after all, he was greatly disappointed, although he had no reasons for hoping for success—to hurl invectives against the fortunate lover, but his good sense and habitual caution prevented his doing so.

The struggle to restrain his feelings gave a sudden pallor to his cheek that touched the gentle heart of the maiden, and she said:

"You have known me but a short time, Cousin Percy, and it seems to me that your love for me may be but a passing fancy. There are other women, gentle and good, with one of whom you may be more successful, and who will make you happy!"

"But other women are not like you!" cried Lorimer, covering his face with his hands. "You think my love but a mere fancy, but I assure you that it is the one passion of my life. I have never loved before, and I shall continue to love you always. Oh, Vivian, Vivian!"

The maiden was grieved at his distress—which was not at all assumed—and replied, in a tone of sympathy:

"Dear Cousin Percy, I am very sorry for you. I wish I had suspected your feelings before, and yet if I had done so, I do not see that I could have acted differently. I cannot be your wife, Percy, but I can and will be your sister and friend. Will you not accept my friendship, since my love is given to another?"

Lorimer, looking up, saw that her eyes were full of tears, and that her scarlet lips were quivering in tender sympathy for him. He caught her hand, pressing it to his lips, and exclaimed:

"You are an angel, Vivian! And since I may not be your husband, let me be your brother as well as cousin. And, Vivian," he added, as if unguardedly, "should you ever find yourself forsaken by your favoured suitor and your parents; should you ever

find yourself friendless and alone, remember that one word will summon me to your side, and that when all the world forsake you, it will be my joy and pride to prove to you my respectful devotion!"

Again he kissed her hand impressively, and then, with a deep sigh, turned away, hastening from the conservatory.

"How strangely he spoke," murmured Vivian, when she found herself alone. "How could he even imagine that the time might come when I should be desolate and friendless! His grief has nearly turned his brain. My happiness is too great to be short-lived, and I am sure that the kind Providence that has so far scattered my life with blessings, will never forsake me."

A look of serene faith glowed in her dark eyes and lighted up her sweet face, and she continued:

"I never liked Cousin Percy so well as now. I am grieved that I should have cast a shadow over his life, which has never been very pleasant, papa says. As I told him, I will be his friend and sister, and perhaps in time he may learn to love some one else who will love him in return."

With this thought, the maiden recovered her usual manner, and arose, making her way to the corner of the conservatory, where, amid bowers of blossoming foliage, were suspended two or three pretty, gilded cages, one of which contained a mocking bird, and the others, canaries.

To these songsters she commenced singing in airy trills that immediately excited the imitative powers of her pets; and in a few moments the place was filled with the harmonies she had evoked, and to which she continued to contribute with a heart as free from care and as full of joy as those of her birds.

Meanwhile, Percy Lorimer had passed through the drawing-rooms, and had been encountered in the hall, on the way to his own apartments, by Mr. Travers himself, who had invited him up to his study.

Lorimer followed him, understanding well the meaning of Mr. Travers's unusually kind manner, and he was not in the least surprised when his cousin remarked, in a sympathizing tone:

"Percy, I have considered your remarks to me, of yesterday, and, while I wish you to feel that I am your friend as well as relative, I am compelled to deny your request for Vivian's hand. As you had suspected, the child loves Philip Ayns court, and he returns her affection with extraordinary ardour and enthusiasm. I have this very morning sanctioned their engagement; for Philip is as dear to me as though he were my own son, and Madelon and I are well pleased with Vivian's choice."

Lorimer betrayed considerable feeling at this announcement, declaring how pure and true was the love he felt for Vivian; how his acquaintance with her had been like a brief burst of sunlight upon a path otherwise dark and desolate; and how it only now remained for him to return to his dreary life, unblest by home joys or friendly communion, and seek forgetfulness in the cares of business.

"Not so, Percy, you must not return to business in your present state of mind. Remain with us according to the terms of the invitation I extended you yesterday. Our home will be all the pleasanter if you become a member of our family. I am sure, when you consider how long Philip has loved Vivian, that you will concede to him the better right to her affections, and that you will hasten to subdue your love for her to the limits of brotherly regard."

"You are right, Mr. Travers," replied Lorimer. "I will overcome my love for Vivian, and I will not flee like a coward from her presence. I feel much need of kindness and unobtrusive friendship in this hour of trial, and I therefore accept your invitation and resolve to remain with you several months."

Mr. Travers expressed his pleasure at this resolution, and Lorimer continued, with much apparent feeling:

"You must allow me, Cousin Drayton, to congratulate you upon your daughter's choice of a husband. Philip Ayns court appears to be all that is good and honourable, and I have no doubt he will make Vivian happy. I shall pray for their mutual happiness, and that Philip may be to you and Mrs. Travers the affectionate son I had hoped to be—"

He paused, appearing to struggle with his grief, and then abruptly quitted the study, hastening to his own rooms.

"The noble fellow!" ejaculated Mr. Travers, looking after him with moistened eyes. "Even in his sorrow and disappointment he has generosity enough to praise his rival and pray for Philip's happiness with Vivian! Percy has a noble nature. I must hasten to Madelon, and tell her how manly he has proved himself. It only needs a description of this interview to make her appreciate him as he deserves."

The suite of apartments, of which the study was one, consisted of three or four rooms, the one next the study being Mrs. Travers's dressing-room.

In this room Mr. Travers found his wife, and he proceeded to describe to her what he termed the noble



[MRS. TRAVERS READS VIVIAN'S HEART ARIGHT.]

conduct of Lorimer, reaping the satisfaction of finding that she shared his favourable opinion of his cousin.

By his self-control and thorough hypocrisy Percy Lorimer had, therefore, succeeded in making a most favourable impression upon his relatives, dispelling the instinctive distrust with which Mrs. Travers and Vivian had regarded him, and strengthening the hold he had already obtained upon the esteem of the unsuspecting Mr. Travers.

The state of affairs afforded him the greatest pleasure when, seated in his own room, he reviewed his late proceedings, notwithstanding the fact that he had been rejected by Vivian.

He had secured his foothold in the house, had acquired a reputation for generosity and nobleness of soul, and he felt that, to use a common expression, the game was all in his own hands.

Not for one moment did he relent in his designs against Vivian's happiness. The weakness of purpose he had momentarily experienced, when the young girl expressed her wonder if her life would always be bright and joyous, had vanished for ever, and henceforth not even a bloodhound—the type of himself—could be more remorseless than he.

Although he had pretended to his cousin that he was a lawyer in good practice, and in the enjoyment of a comfortable income, he had spoken falsely.

It was true that he was well known as a criminal lawyer in London, but the cases upon which he had been retained had never been of importance, and had yielded to him but a bare living.

His greatest source of revenue had been from the employment of his detective faculties, which were well known to the police.

He had been often engaged by them to hunt down some fugitive from the law, and many a thief owed his incarceration within the walls of a prison to the remarkable keenness of the elegant and fastidious Percy Lorimer.

As was natural, he longed for higher quarry than defaulters, and he had a most intense appreciation of the luxuries which wealth alone can supply, including perfect ease and congenial society.

He felt that the luxuries of others were but necessities to him, and he felt it comparatively easy to compass any intrigue rather than return to his shabby lodgings and hand-to-mouth existence.

His designs did not appear particularly bad or heartless to himself.

The man who had listened unmoved to the tears and prayers of fugitives' wives and children, was not likely to be greatly moved by a young girl's anguish at losing her lover and friend.

He flattered himself that his personal attractions were equal to those of Philip Aynscoot, and that, removed from the secretary's personal influence, Vivian would soon seek the shelter of her rejected suitor's love.

With such thoughts Lorimer beguiled the remainder of the day, exhibiting a marked cheerfulness, although secluding himself in his rooms.

The family, with the exception of Philip, who knew nothing of his proposal and rejection, believed him to be in a state bordering upon distraction, and Mrs. Travers sent a delicate luncheon to his room, which was, however, returned untouched.

About an hour before dinner, Drayton Travers went to Lorimer's sitting-room, and obtained admittance, finding his cousin pacing to and fro with apparent weariness, and his countenance wearing an expression of resignation.

Mr. Travers grasped his hand in silent sympathy, exclaiming:

"You must not shut yourself up longer, Percy. Vivian has been sad all the afternoon, thinking of the sorrow she has unintentionally caused you. Can you not meet us at the dinner-table?"

Lorimer replied in the affirmative, feeling an internal conviction that it would be impossible to further prolong his fast, and Mr. Travers soon withdrew.

At dinner Lorimer met only Mr. and Mrs. Travers and Vivian, the latter of whom received him kindly, and with a conscious blush.

Mrs. Travers pressed his hand warmly, and exerted herself to divert his mind, and to show him her friendliness and sympathy.

Philip Aynscoot's place was vacant, and, in reply to Lorimer's inquiry, Mr. Travers explained that his secretary had gone out to dine at General Cotton's, where he had also been invited.

He did not deem it necessary to explain that Philip had intended declining the invitation, in order to remain at home with his betrothed, but that he had urged him to go, fearing that Lorimer might be grieved at encountering his successful rival while his sorrow was so fresh.

Lorimer permitted himself to be cheered by the attentions of his relatives, but his face did not lose its pensive look, and his manner continued to be subdued. As the dinner progressed, he began to listen eagerly for a sound in the hall, or the announcement of a visitor, and his consequent abstraction served to confirm the impression of his grief.

They were trifling over the dessert of bloomy hot-house grapes, etc., when, at last, his expectations were gratified, and he heard the voice of Dennis, the faith-

ful old servitor, in altercation in the hall with Mrs. Hawkers.

Drayton Travers and his wife heard it, too, and both became pale, and the former arose abruptly, hastening into the hall.

"There!" Lorimer heard the woman exclaim triumphantly. "I told you he'd see me again if he was eating his dinner, and if he hadn't left any orders for my admittance. You'll find I ain't to be slighted by lackeys—"

Her voice died away, there was a low murmur as if Mr. Travers were talking, then the servant retreated to the kitchen, and Mr. Travers conducted the visitor into his wife's sitting-room, the room adjoining the dining-parlour.

Mrs. Travers then arose, with an agitated manner, and said, tremulously:

"Vivian, as soon as you and Cousin Percy have finished your dinner, go up to your papa's study. Do not come down again until I call you. And you need not ring, for the table to be cleared, as I do not wish the servants to enter this room till your papa's visitor has gone."

Without noticing her daughter's surprise, Mrs. Travers made her way to the door connecting the dining-room with the boudoir, and entering the latter room, securely closed the door behind her.

There was an embarrassing pause in the conversation between Vivian and Lorimer, and then the former said, quietly:

"You heard what mamma said, Cousin Percy? She expects us to go up to the study directly, as we have both finished dinner. Come!"

She half arose, but Lorimer laid a gently-restraining hand on hers, as a low murmur of voices came to his hearing, and said:

"Wait but one moment, Cousin Vivian—"

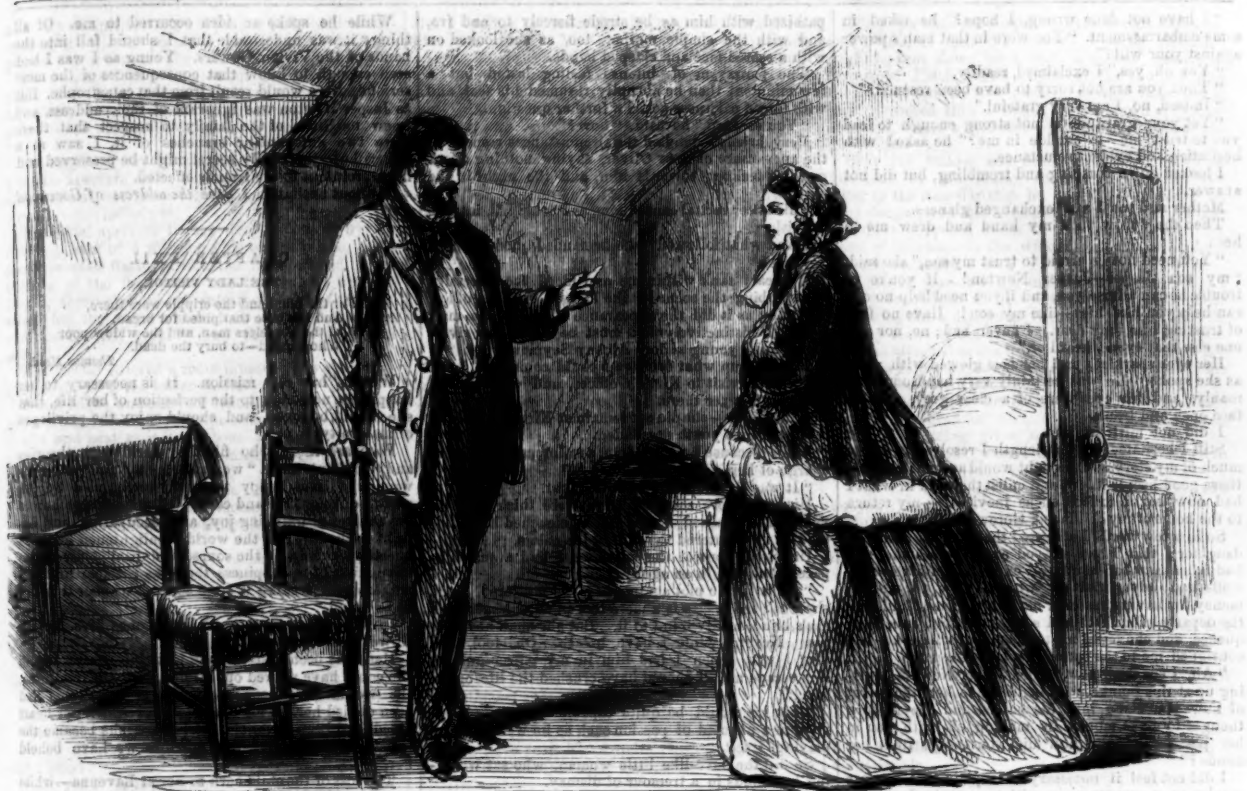
"I cannot!" was the response. "If we remain, we may overhear something not intended for our ears. Mamma thinks we have already left the room—"

"Wait but a single moment!" repeated Lorimer, increasing his gentle restraint upon her hand. "There! I am ready to go."

As he made this declaration, the shrill tones of Mrs. Hawkers penetrated the room, and the young girl heard her name mentioned.

With a look of surprise, and scarcely conscious of his procedure, she allowed Lorimer to gently force her back in her chair, while she listened with intense eagerness for a repetition of the words she had heard.

(To be continued.)



[THE LADY VISITOR.]

THE WRONG DRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Golden Mask," "The Stranger's Secret," "Man and His Lot," "The Warning Voice," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

MOTHER AND SON.

Unkiss thy brows and spread those wrath-clench'd hands.

Some spite accurst within thy bosom mates,
To work thy ruin. Strive with it, my brother,
Strive bravely with it—drive it from thy heart—
Tis the deader of a noble heart,
Curse it, and bid it part. JAMES BAILEY.

THE house in which I found myself thus unexpectedly was, as I have said, a place of no pretension; but of great respectability. The room had an old-fashioned aspect, with the furniture and drapery and carpets all apparently preserved from a past generation; but all scrupulously clean and arranged with a painful nicety of order.

And the widowed woman, who was the presiding genius of the place, was quite in keeping with it.

She had silvery hair, and wore a cap of snowy hue, a dove-coloured silk dress, a white muslin apron, nettles, and was altogether spotless and immaculate.

Clearly the man who had so unscrupulously rescued me from the hands of the ruffian Dan, was her son. There was a great likeness between them, though he was tall and broad-shouldered, and she was little and bird-like in her appearance and movements. As clearly the mother doted on the son—devoured him with her loving eyes—and their delight at this unexpected meeting was unbounded.

When he apprised her of his adventure, and explained in a whisper what he anticipated from it, she regarded me with peculiar interest; but even this was only second to the interest she took in Jasper, as she had called him, or rather, I should say, because of the interest he appeared to have in me.

"And so," he said, turning from his mother and taking both my hands in his; "you have no recollection of me?"

I looked steadily into his frank, open face, which was bronzed with exposure to sun and air.

"No," I then answered, firmly.

"Think," he said, looking at me with a keen gaze.

I did, I recalled all the scenes I had passed through since my flight from Gorewood Place, but it was of no use, and I told him so.

He smiled, and to my surprise he said:

"Let me try to refresh your memory," he said.

"You have not forgotten a name so remarkable as that of Plunkett?"

No: I had not forgotten that, or the tragedy connected with it, and as I recalled both, my face flushed scarlet, then turned deadly pale.

"You recollect my unfortunate friend and benefactor?" the young man asked.

I replied in the affirmative.

"You were brought by him to our office—I may say ours, for I am junior partner now—on the night before his sudden death?"

"Yes—I—that is, I—"

Hesitating and stammering out I scarce knew what, I said I was only conscious of alarm at these reminiscences. My suspicion as to the cause of the lawyer Plunkett's death was always painful to me, and I trembled now lest I was about to be questioned respecting it.

But instead of putting a further question to me, Jasper turned to his mother.

"What did I always say, mother?" he exclaimed.

"Didn't I always say there was a mystery about that affair, and doesn't this child's confusion prove it? No one in the office knew on what instructions he was acting. No papers were ever found. Why he brought this girl to the office was a secret, and her disappearance with the new housekeeper only increased the mystery."

"Ah, Jasper!" cried the widow, folding her mitted hands, and drawing a hard breath, "don't tell me! That poor dear man never died fair and natural-like in his bed. And as to sleeping drops! what have I always said?"

"More than I should care to repeat, mother," returned the son, with a laugh.

"Ah, I dare say! I dare say! Dis of sleeping drops indeed, after thirty years! It was that strange woman, that housekeeper, coming nobody knew where and going off nobody knew how—"

"Mother!" interposed Jasper.

"Why, what did the lady say? She who came to see your poor friend and found what had happened? There's something wrong here," she said, "there's something more than suspicious."

"Remember, mother, you had that in confidence," said the young man.

"And if I did? What can this child know about it? Suppose I told her it was Mrs. Vivian Gower who said this, what would it mean to her? I might as well say Mrs. Brown, or Jones, or Robinson—every bit as well, mightn't I, dear?"

I could only blush as she put her arm round my neck, and looked down into my face.

How little did this garrulous little woman imagine how much I was interested in the name she had mentioned, or suppose all it meant to me? So! Vivian Gower's wife suspected foul play, and that on the part of Jacintha, whom she could hardly fail to recognize by description as the abandoned housekeeper! Here was a fact that might one day be of moment—one day when the reckoning between the two branches of our divided family should come about.

I could have little doubt that Plunkett had acted for Vivian Gower in searching me out in answer to the advertisement, and I was curious to know how far Vivian's wife had admitted the interest they felt in discovering me when she found her project in answering the advertisement defeated.

Upon this I could, of course, ask no questions; but the conclusion in my mind was that it was Plunkett who alone of the firm—that of Plunkett, Colt, and Co.—had been taken into confidence and that with his death the confidence had been broken off.

As soon as the widow had relieved her mind by the expressions stated, she left it to her son to continue the conversation.

This he did by informing me that on the sudden death of Plunkett he, then a senior clerk in the office, to which point he had worked himself up by unremitting diligence, had been taken into partnership, so that the firm now stood as Plunkett, Colt, and Newton.

"Yes," cried the little woman, eyeing her son with undisguised pride, "—and Newton! That's Jasper—my son, Jasper Newton!"

"Now, mother," he interposed, "is it necessary for you to repeat that at every turn? As I was going to say, the firm being in reality Colt—"

"—And Newton!" cried the mother, quite unable to restrain her pride in the honour to which the family name had attained.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, impatiently, "and that being so, and as the firm represent to an extent the interests of the Gower family, I feel justified in taking the course I have done, in rescuing you—as some one they are interested in—from the hands of a low, dissipated ruffian."

I murmured my thanks for his timely help, but said no more.

My silence evidently puzzled and disappointed him. He expected that I should offer to explain who I was, and what were the circumstances which had led to my being in the situation in which he had found me. My own heart beat violently as I felt this, and questioned within myself what admissions I should be safe in making.

"I have not done wrong, I hope?" he asked, in some embarrassment. "You were in that man's power against your will?"

"Yes, oh, yes," I exclaimed, readily.

"Then you are not sorry to have been rescued?"

"Indeed, no, I am very grateful."

"Yet your gratitude is not strong enough to lead you to trust me—to confide in me?" he asked with hesitation and evident reluctance.

I looked down blushing and trembling, but did not answer.

Mother and son I saw exchanged glances.

Then the widow took my hand and drew me to her:

"You need not be afraid to trust my son," she said, "my son Jasper—Jasper Newton! If you're in trouble he can advise you, and if you need help no one can help you like him—like my son! Have no fear of trusting him, my dear. I never had; no, nor any one else that ever I heard of."

Her eyes sparkled, and her face glowed with pride as she spoke. He was certainly very handsome and manly, and his eyes were of a clear grey, and his face open and frank.

I did not mistrust him.

Still I hesitated, until at length I resolved to tell so much of my story as I thought would account for what these good people knew, and enlist their aid in what I had now begun to look on as an inevitable—my return to the home of my childhood, Gorewood Place.

So in a few words I admitted that I was a baroness's daughter; that I had strayed away from home, and had fallen into bad hands. I explained how the Peggwells had advertised me with a view to making money for having restored me to my friends, and how the departed Plunkett had sought me out in consequence, and conveyed me to his office, where he had consigned me to the care of his housekeeper.

"Ah, I see it all now," cried Jasper Newton, starting up at this point: "he confided to her the secret of how you came into his hands, and she in turn thought to make money by making off with you in her possession. But how did you escape from her hands?"

I did not feel it necessary to explain that he was wholly on a wrong scent with respect to Jacintha; but proceeded to inform him that she had conveyed me to the house of the Italian, whose name I did not mention, and what had happened there.

To that strange narrative he listened with a surprised look, especially when I spoke of the resurrection of the apparently dead victim of treachery and violence. But it was when I described her, and began to grow enthusiastic in praise of her beauty, that a quick, a terrible change came over him such as I never forget.

He turned from a look of robust health to the aspect of a corpse.

"Mother," he gasped, "mother—do you hear?"

"Surely yes; I'm listening, my boy," she answered.

"And don't you see—good heavens, is it possible that you don't recognize—"

He sank back in his chair, and thick beads of dew came out on his brow.

"Why, Jasper! what's this? You're ill, Jasper?" cried the doting mother, starting up in alarm.

"No!"

With a sudden resolution he dashed the drops from his brow, and leaning forward caught me by both arms.

"Answer me," he said, "answer me, I implore you. And the truth; let me have the truth—did you hear the name of this poor, tortured girl?"

"I did. It was—"

He put out his hand.

Between his anxiety to satisfy himself and his dread of the truth for which he had implored, the struggle reflected in his working face—was terrible.

"Let me—" he began. He abruptly stopped himself. "No, no, no!" he exclaimed, "I will hear it from your lips. Her name—"

"Violet."

He released me, and clasped his face in both his hands.

"I knew it! I knew it!" he moaned.

The widow interrupted.

"Oh, why do you take on so, Jasper?" she pleaded.

He started up, darting an angry glance even at her—his mother.

"Why?" he burst out, "why do I feel? Why does my heart beat? Why do I breathe the common air? Why do I live? Is Violet Maldon so little to me that I can learn with cool indifference that she has fallen into the hands of demons, who torture her and plot her death? Oh, mother, mother, you know the passion that is eating into my life, and you can ask me this?"

It was piteous to see this tall, broad-shouldered man, so full of strength and vigour, suddenly yielding to a woman's weakness. From my heart I sym-

pathized with him as he strode fiercely to and fro, and with the simple mother, too, as she looked on with a scared face and clasped hands.

The paroxysm of intense feeling lasted but a few minutes; then he abruptly resumed his seat, and with forced calmness asked a further question.

"You escaped," he said, "how?"

Very briefly I detailed the circumstances respecting the appearance of poor Oliver, saying nothing about my own feelings towards him, and the night in the park.

This latter recital caused him, as I could tell, intense anguish.

"And what followed?" he demanded quickly.

What?

My heart sank within me as I faced the necessity of describing the scene in the Messrs. Kirtle's office, involving as it did the appearance there of the man whom I instinctively felt must be hated as a rival, namely, the young sailor, Albany Seymour.

Flushing up with courage I could command, I described our visit to Kirtle's office, and what passed with the lawyer there.

"But Violet—she did not remain at Kirtle's office?"

"No—because a young man, a sailor, came and took charge of her. And they left—"

"It was Seymour!" he shrieked out.

His eyes were starting, there were thick beads of rain on his flushed brow, and he clenched his hands till the nails entered the skin of his palms.

Unable to control the emotions I had aroused, he paced the room in an agony.

"He is in the plot against her," he muttered, "and she won't see it. He is a mere tool in their hands, and she's blind, madly blind to it. But she shall never be his. Never, while I have breath. Oh, fool, fool that I was, when I had him in my power and let him escape me. I should have crushed the life out of him!"

That he would be quite capable of destroying a rival in a moment of passion such as he was now displaying, I felt.

So did the dove-like little woman, who sat wringing her hands in a tremour of dismay.

"Jasper!" she ventured to ejaculate.

But he did not hear her: all his faculties were concentrated and absorbed in the passion that was racking him on to madness.

"This is jealousy," she ventured to add, "and that is a poor, unworthy passion—"

"Jealousy!" he shrieked out, "no, matter, it is worse—worse a thousand times—it is hatred. Oh, merciful heaven, how I hate him!"

He twisted his fingers into his short, crisp hair, and dropping into the chair from which he had risen, sat there in a long and awful silence.

It was broken by his speaking in a cold, forced tone, which was as the ghost of his voice.

"They left—together?" he asked.

"Not alone," I replied.

"Thank God!"

He said no more, but presently rising, informed the widow that he would go to his own room, and so left us.

As he passed out I saw through the open door that the room he entered was furnished in a manner that suggested physical culture rather than legal studies. On the walls were arranged boxing-gloves, dumbbells, fella, wire-masks, and similar objects. In a corner stood a couple of Indian clubs. Across a chair hung a flannel suit, and beside it a pair of cricketing shoes.

It was evidently by means of athletic exercises that he succeeded in gaining his great strength, and supporting his fine muscular condition, and it was sad to think how love of a woman might, in spite of all this, reduce a man to pitiable weakness, and wring tears from the eyes of one who would have received the hardest blows, the most severe punishment, without flinching.

For more than two hours the widow and I sat together conversing in whispers, while she quietly knitted at one of the mittens she was accustomed to wear. When that time had passed, the young man suddenly re-appeared. The paroxysm seemed to have passed over. He was pale, but calm, and his lips were compressed so tightly that they merely formed a line across his face.

With an effort at calmness he said:

"One thing you have not explained. I am at a loss to understand the interest Mr. Plunkett's clients, the Gowers, had in you. Are you related to them?"

"My name is Gower," I replied.

"Indeed! That accounts for all. They are your friends, and you would of course wish to be restored to them?"

"Yes."

"Owing to the loss of Mr. Plunkett's papers it will be necessary that you should give me their address—"

While he spoke an idea occurred to me. Of all things it was undesirable that I should fall into the hands of the Vivian Gowers. Young as I was I had seen enough to know that consequences of the most serious nature would result from that catastrophe. But as Jasper Newton was ignorant of their address, and knew too little of the family to suspect that there were two antagonistic branches of it, I saw at a glance how the family secret might be preserved and my restoration to my friends effected.

Without hesitation I gave the address of Gorewood Place.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LADY VISITOR.

For the blind and the cripple were there,
And the babe that pined for bread,
And the homeless man, and the widow poor
Who begged—to bury the dead.

Thomas Hood.

WOMAN has one mission. It is necessary to her happiness, necessary to the perfection of her life, that she should be loved, and should enjoy the privileges of maternity.

Who are those who fill the world with theories and complaints about "woman's rights" and "woman's wrongs?" Not happy mothers, surrounded by the objects of their love and care. Not those whose homes are centres of unending joy, and occupation and delight to them. No: the world is enlightened on those questions chiefly by the soured and disappointed, who have missed the happiness that was possible to them, and are ever seeking it from sources whence it is not to be found.

In the number of the unhappy ones Mrs. Vivian Gower found a place.

Had she been a mother amidst children on whom she could have poured out all her love and fondness, she would have been immensely happy. This had been denied her. This one object, for which her heart pined, had been withheld, and hence she became the faded, unsmiling, unhappy creature we have beheld her.

The loss of the child born to her at Ravenna—while on a tour with her husband in Italy—had cast a cloud over her whole life.

Out of the shadow of that misfortune she never emerged, and all her efforts to do so were fruitless and unavailing. The care that would have expended itself on her child sought other objects. Her home was perfection, and so far as it was possible to find solace in home-occupations, she found it.

Then, of late, another and unexpected source of gratification had arisen in a chance discovery of a monstrous piece of iniquity practised on the part of Sir Appelm and Lady Gower. This discovery and the occupation it afforded—the new object in life which it presented—was invaluable. It roused the drooping, wearied woman out of the listlessness which was preying on her life, and already gave a healthier and freer current to her life.

But though this was so, that life still passed very wearily, and it was necessary to fill it up with pursuits in which the sympathies and the affections played their part.

This led to occasional days spent in the harmless occupation of visiting the poor.

Every Tuesday and every Friday, this lone, faded, restless little woman betook herself, with many sighs and means, to one or two favoured spots in the lowest quarters of the metropolis, partly to distribute her charities in a mild form, partly, to communicate to others the depression which was crushing out her own life, under the idea that sympathy and consolation must be acceptable to them.

In accordance with this arrangement, she, one Friday, found herself in a low lodging-house in the neighbourhood of Smithfield, which formed the central point of what she called her "district." The place was filthy and revolting, and the reception she invariably met with was in keeping with the place. Low women and brutal men resented her appearance among them, and if some of the gentler or more hypocritical were bribed by what she gave into listening to what she said, they did it as a concession, and took care to show that they would much rather have been left alone, and not been interfered with.

On all the occasions of her visits to this house Vivian Gower's wife had been resolutely refused admission to the rooms occupied by a family on the upper floor, that immediately under the roof.

"They were foreigners and a bad lot," she was always informed, and she drew her own conclusion that they were visited by their own priests and that she had no right to interfere—certainly that her doing so would be of no avail.

On this particular day, therefore, it was with some surprise that she received a piece of intelligence.

It was communicated to her by a Mrs. Casey, who said that the "top floor" had been in trouble, had

narrowly escaped the claws of justice, and—which constituted the special point of the message—had expressed a desire to see this Visitor!

The faintest flush of excitement came into the wan cheek of the faded woman at this news, and wondering within herself what it might mean, she at once proceeded to mount the dark staircase in search of the top floor.

Groping her way in the dark she reached a door with an aperture in it, through which a faint light streamed out, and in answer to the tap of her knuckles a man's voice called out.

Then the aperture in the door widened, by the drawing back of a wooden slide on the inside, and a face presented itself. From the light behind it, the features of the face were not discernible; but two bright, sharp eyes peered into the darkness to some effect, for the voice which had answered the raps exclaimed, "All right!" and then the door was opened.

The Visitor entered a room presenting a great contrast to those on the lower floors.

It was small, and the roof leaning to on either side gave it an uncomfortable appearance; but it was as bright and neat as if it had been a ship's cabin, and the floor glistened so that it might have been compared with the deck of a vessel.

Expressing intense surprise in her face as she went in, Vivian's wife was for the moment so interested in the room that she could hardly bestow a look on its occupant.

When she did—when she turned her face full towards him—an exclamation of wonder, almost of dismay, escaped her.

"We have met before?" she cried out.

"Possibly, madam."

And she shut the door behind her.

"But—I ought to recall your name?" the Visitor persisted.

"It is a very simple one. I am known as Jerome."

She shook her head.

"No!" she exclaimed.

"You do not recall that name? Will Catherine assist you?"

"Ah, yes! Is it possible?"

Jerome the Burglar—fortiwashe—smiled sadly. He had one of those mobile, expressive faces peculiar to his countrymen—a handsome face, with a dark, sinister expression in it—and he smiled sadly, almost touchingly, as he responded:

"Yes, madam," he said: "the chances of life are many. Mine have brought me to poverty and to this place. Undoubtedly, shall I say? No; yet my misdeeds have only kept pace with my misfortunes. When fate is against one, what alternative is there? The worst of us must live. The law will not suffer us to die. At least, not by our own hands. All forms of suicide are illegal—except starvation."

The little woman sighed. She was hardly listening to him. Her thoughts were in the past.

"We last met," she said, "in the crisis of my life. It was at Ravenna?"

He nodded.

"You had returned from England after an unsuccessful attempt as a singer at the Italian Opera here, with the daughter of the people in whose house we stayed—Gaspero by name—all the branches of our family suddenly summoned thither to be present at the birth of my child. You see I have not forgotten you?"

"The Signora has an excellent memory," said Jerome, with animation.

"Oh, I have forgotten nothing that happened at that time—the period which promised me the greatest happiness, and yielded me only enduring misery. You will hardly have forgotten the birth of my child—birth I call it, though it was heaven's will that it should never see the light of day!"

"I remember it, perfectly. I recall it to my mind as it lay dead."

"Yes: born dead."

"It was the woman whom I loved, it was Jacintha who showed it to me—dead."

He had been bending over his hands, which he held before him, the tips of the fingers lightly touching; but his eyes were raised to the face of the lady he was addressing.

And the expression in those eyes was singularly significant.

"It was to remind me of this—to claim an old acquaintance—that you wished to seem?" the lady asked, after a moment's pause.

"In part—yes."

"Not wholly?"

Jerome drew from his breast a letter which appeared to have been torn in shreds in a moment of passion and afterwards carefully re-united.

"Listen to this," he said, and he read: "no, I will not comply with your request. Again I have saved you from the consequences of your evil deeds. But for me the boy would have given evidence against you, and nothing could have prevented your conviction."

But I decline to renew the old relations. I will not give you money. No; not to relieve your pressing wants. There is a limit to all this. I reached it long ago. Nothing shall move me to depart from my resolution. You hear that?"

"Certainly; but who is it who writes this?" asked Vivian's wife.

"The woman, Jacintha; she who has been my ruin."

"And she declines to relieve your necessities? But is there any reason why she should do so? Have you any claim on her?"

"Any claim? Every claim, or I am mistaken. But we shall see. In the meantime—"

"You are in want?"

"Exactly."

"And on the ground of the past you appeal to me?"

"True—on the ground of the past."

"Well, it is little that I can spare in charity—"

He started back, overthrowing the chair behind him as he did so.

"Charity!" he cried out, disdainfully. "No! I can steal. I do not beg."

"But you ask me—"

"To advance me money which, or I am much mistaken, I shall be able to return to you a thousand times doubled. Jacintha has deceived me and abandoned me. Oh, it is most good! But she shall see. A little light breaks in upon my brain, and who knows what may happen?"

The lady looked confused and bewildered.

"I must confess that I do not understand you," she said.

"And you will not trust me: why should you? I can promise you nothing. I cannot say to you in words, 'Believe my present necessities, and in return I will secure to Vivian Gower the baronetcy and the fortune of which he has been robbed.'"

He stopped abruptly.

The quick look of intelligence that came into the face he was gazing into furtively caused him to do so.

"You have seen Sir Anselm Gower's child?" she demanded, with spasmodic eagerness.

"Never."

The eager expression died away in a moment. It was succeeded by one of strong curiosity.

"And yet you speak to me of the one object nearest our hearts, as if you believed in its accomplishment?"

He nodded.

"I repeat, I cannot understand this," said the lady.

"And you prefer to treat it as an attempt to extort money? Be it so."

He buttoned up his coat, and moved away towards the window.

Everything in the manner of the man was significant. It was impossible to doubt his having some grounds for the step he had taken, and for the hints and suggestions he had thrown out. Convinced of this Vivian's wife drew from her purse a note and held it towards him.

"Take this," she said.

He clutched at it and held it up towards the light.

"Five!" he said, with a sneer. "Little enough for a fortune and a baronetcy; but a beginning. Just a beginning."

"I shall see you again," said the lady, timidly.

"Yes; when you least expect me."

"Good day!"

He bowed, held the door open as his visitor descended the dark stairs, and then closed and bolted it.

"Five pounds towards—how much?" he asked himself as he walked to the window and looked out.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HOUSE OUT OF TOWN.

The agony of parting, who shall tell?

Wilson.

On the day of this interview, Jasper Newton informed me that he had received a letter from Gorewood Place, in answer to one he had written, praying that I might be sent home without delay.

The letter from the young lawyer had been addressed to Vivian Gower, and this reply bore that signature. To Jasper Newton these simple facts conveyed nothing—he did not know enough of the family to discriminate between the baronet and his brother. But to me it was full of significance. Here was one last attempt to keep the precious secret. It would have been fatal had Sir Anselm acknowledged to a daughter: the letter might become evidence of the most dangerous kind; but as a stranger had written, evidently under a wrong impression, there could be little risk in keeping up that wrong impression. At all events it was the safest, indeed it was the only course open. A letter in a disguised hand, and with an assumed signature, was as little compromising as anything could be, where danger threatened at every step.

The letter thanked Jasper Newton for his kindness, and requested that the writer's "young relation" might be sent down by a train specified; but not to Gorewood Place. The length of the journey and consequent fatigue was pleaded against that, and it was requested that I might be set down at Exeter Junction, where a domestic would be in attendance to receive me.

Both the widow and her son were gratified at the tone of the letter, because it justified the latter in the singular step he had taken to rescue me from danger, and also because it conferred an obligation on a supposed client of the firm to which the name of Newton—in the widow's estimation—added an undying lustre.

It pained me—it made me displease myself—that I should be obliged to quit those honest souls under something like a deception; but my position was such, and my terror of the consequences that would result to those attached to me from any indiscretion on my part was so great, that I dared not confide to them the simple, unsophisticated truth.

Next morning a compartment in a first-class carriage was secured for me in a train going to Devon, instructions being given to the guard, as to the junction at which I was to alight, and so I set forth on my homeward journey—alone!

Was my heart light, were my spirits gay and buoyant, during the long journey?

Oh, no, no: far from it.

When I looked back I saw into what trouble and danger my impulsiveness had hurried me and those about me, and when I thought of the future—only so far into it as that journey's end—I shuddered with apprehension.

The letter which had so satisfied my friends had given me little comfort.

I suspected the arrangement for my being met by Jacintha—the "domestic" could be no one else—half way on my journey.

"I shall see Gorewood Place no more!" I exclaimed aloud, and it had never seemed so beautiful, so inviting, as in that moment when I believed it hopelessly unattainable.

I did not know the station for which I was destined; but when the train stopped at it, I instantly recognized Jacintha on the platform, eagerly looking out for me.

We met almost without a word.

Her face was rigid and stony, and it was with a ruthless grip that she seized my hand and dragged me to the door of a waiting-room, over which a porter was evidently keeping guard.

We entered, and to my amazement some one sitting with their back to the window rose, and coming forward clasped me in a warm and passionate embrace.

It was my lady mother.

Her face, as she half turned it towards the light, was white and thin; her eyelids were red, and there were tears upon her cheeks.

"My darling, my darling," oh, how could you—but I will not reproach you."

Those were her impassioned words.

"You cannot forgive me—" I began.

But she would hear nothing. Hugging me to her heart, she smothered me with kisses. All the pent-up tenderness of years—all the motherly love she had kept so rigidly in subjection while my young heart hungered for it almost to breaking—seemed lavished in those precious moments.

How tenderly, how devotedly, how passionately, she loved me, I understood then for the first time in my life.

I understood it, and my shame and remorse bowed me down and left me dumb. I had no excuses, no apologies to offer. All that I had gone through seemed like the stages of a hideous dream, and now there had come the miserable awakening.

"The time is short," said Jacintha in a cold warning voice, interrupting our raptures.

"Ah, yes—but it is cruel! Cruel! Oh Jacintha, is this inevitable?"

"Yes."

That was her icy answer.

"But if I refuse? If it is impossible for me to part with the child I have regained?"

"Part?" I asked in amazement.

"Yes, darling, we meet here but to part. I have said that I will utter no word of reproach, and I will not. If you are ever to feel that this is the consequence of your own act, it shall not be from my lips."

"Let it be from mine, then," cried Jacintha; "for on this there must be no mistake. You are not too young, Julius, to understand that it was not without a motive—a powerful and serious motive—that you were brought up in seclusion in your father's house, and in a disguise the meaning of which you will one day learn. As there was a motive in this, it will not be difficult for you to comprehend that your

one act of folly—that of absconding with a companion in every respect unworthy of you—has compromised yourself and all connected with you. But for a series of happy chances, the work of years would have been undone—as it would still be, were it permitted you to return to Groswood Place. Understand, then—that cannot be permitted. You will go there no more!”

“Oh, mother, mother!” I cried out, “they will not part us?”

She threw her arms about my neck, and her tears fell hot on my brow.

“It is inevitable!” she exclaimed, in an agony of feeling.

“But not for ever?”

“No, oh, no, no! That would be too dreadful. That would be purchasing life itself too dearly. No darling, we shall meet again, if heaven but lends me strength to survive this trial.”

As she spoke, Jacintha laid her hand upon my shoulder.

“Come,” she said, “it is time.”

At those words my mother looked up fiercely, and made as if she would have beaten her off; but the Italian only regarded her with a confident, half-defiant smile.

“You are glad to separate us,” said her ladyship reproachfully, “my agony is pleasure to you.”

“It is revenge,” I heard Jacintha mutter under her breath, and I understood well enough the bitterness of the jealous animosity that lurked in the hearts of those two.

But let me draw a veil over that heartrending separation. Let me silence, if I can, the shriek that rings in my ears across an intervening life, as the Italian tore me from my mother's clasping arms. Let me blot out from my memory, if I can, the sight of horror, when, as we drove from the spot, I saw—it was the last glimpse—the stately figure I had so often admired for its queenly grace fall in a huddled mass of wretchedness upon the floor.

A long, weary, weary journey succeeds. We are on board a ship, and I am hopelessly ill down in a stifling cabin—I who indulged those golden dreams of a life of a ship at sea!

Insensible almost, I know that we are on land again. We make another journey through a grey, flat, treeless country. We reach a town, solitary and deserted. We go out into the illimitable waste of open country that stretches around it.

Miles of a road across a bleak, sterile country bring us to a lone, forlorn, deserted mansion.

It is surrounded by a high wall, and there is an iron gate, with a sinister grille in it—an aperture through which applicants for admission may be examined at leisure.

We are applicants. Jacintha pulls at the handle of a bell suspended beside the gate.

Then two villainous eyes look out at the grille, chilling me to the marrow with the expression there is in them.

And then—we are admitted.

(To be continued.)

INCOMES.—If, adopting the American system, every man's income were published, it would, to begin with, act in the same way as the compulsory use of the word “limited” after the title of the joint-stock companies established on that principle. It would be a guide to tradesmen as to the amount of credit which they might safely give; though, indeed, from cases which occasionally come before the public, it would appear that most tradesmen are literally very fond of trusting people whom they must know to be thoroughly insolvent. Again, if every man's income were known, nobody would be tempted, as so many are now, to live beyond their means just for the pleasure of making believe that they are much better off than they really are. If a man with a thousand a year were spending two thousand, he would be aware that all his neighbours would look upon him as a great fool and knave. As it is, if he manages judiciously, it is surprising how long he may persuade them that he is really making the two thousand which they can plainly perceive him to be spending.

A JEWISH DIVORCE.—As it is somewhat interesting to know what the ceremony consists of, we give it as enacted after judicial decision had been given. It was as follows:—The wife, dressed in black, with a black veil over her face, appeared with her husband before a council of ten men, members of the synagogue. There were also three rabbins, one of whom acted as the petitioner, and wrote out on parchment a petition in Hebrew, asking for a divorce, and also wrote out the decree of divorce; the second acted as the respondent or defendant, and the third as a kind of judge; the council of ten acting as a jury. The man and wife having appeared they stood side by side

before the council. The rabbins and council then took an oath, all shaking hands—the oath being to the effect that they would always consider the divorce legal and binding. The wife then removed her veil, and the rabbi who acted as petitioner read the petition in German, and stated the case to the council, who, having heard it, decreed the divorce. The decree, folded up, was handed to the husband, and the wife raising her open hands, the husband dropped the paper into them. The rabbi who acted as judge then took it and cut the ends like a fringe. He then handed it to the president of the synagogue, telling him to place it among the records of the society, to be preserved as evidence of the divorce. This having been done, the ceremony was finished, and the parties departed, no longer man and wife.

STATISTICS.

THE IMPORTATION OF EGGS.—In the first five months of the present year more than 196,000,000 eggs were imported into this country from abroad; until 1861 the import never reached that number in an entire year. Last year the number imported reached what seemed the enormous number of nearly a million a day; but now, in the 31 days of May, 1866, the import exceeded 56,000,000. The average price fixed at the Custom-house for the computation of the real value of the eggs imported was as low as 4s. 6d. per 120 in 1854; but, like too many other articles, eggs have risen in price since that time, and, in the last six years have generally been computed to exceed 6s. per 120 in value.

EXPORTS OF COAL.—The exports of coal, culm, and cinder from the United Kingdom for the four months ending April 30, reached 2,915,877 tons, as compared with 2,687,795 tons in the corresponding period of 1865, and 2,674,049 tons in the corresponding period of 1864. The increase was principally to Russia, France, Spain, Italy, and other Continental markets, the imminence of war having caused no doubt a brisker demand. France, which is still our largest customer, took in the four months no less than 576,471 tons, as compared with 501,030 tons in the corresponding period of 1865, and 492,742 tons in the first four months of 1864. The total value of the coal, culm, and cinder exported for the four months of 1866 reached 1,494,382l., against 1,280,163l. in 1865, and 1,267,487l. in 1864. The month of April presented the largest and most striking increase, the exports having amounted to 930,079 tons, as compared with 794,245 tons in the corresponding month of 1865, and 784,571 tons in April, 1864.

TEN YEARS' WOOL.—In 1856 the imports of wool into the United Kingdom amounted to 116,211,392 lb. In 1857 the total rose to 129,749,898 lb., but in 1858 it declined to 126,738,723 lb. In 1859 the imports were 133,284,634 lb., and in 1860, 148,396,577 lb. In 1861 there was again a check, and the imports receded to 147,172,841 lb. In 1862 there was again a great advance, and the receipts rose to 171,943,472 lb. In 1863 there was a further advance to 177,377,664 lb.; in 1864 to 206,437,045 lb.; and in 1865 to 212,206,747 lb. The imports have thus nearly doubled in ten years. The exports of wool have, however, greatly increased during the same period. In 1856 they amounted to 26,679,793 lb.; in 1857 to 36,487,219 lb.; in 1858 to 26,701,542 lb.; in 1859 to 29,106,750 lb.; in 1860 to 30,761,867 lb.; in 1861 to 34,877,104 lb.; in 1862 to 48,076,499 lb.; in 1863 to 63,927,961 lb.; in 1864 to 55,993,739 lb.; and in 1865 to 82,444,330 lb. The excess of the imports over the exports was thus as follows in each year:—1856, 89,531,599 lb.; 1857, 93,262,679 lb.; 1858, 100,037,181 lb.; 1859, 104,177,884 lb.; 1860, 117,634,710 lb.; 1861, 92,795,757 lb.; 1862, 123,866,973 lb.; 1863, 118,449,703 lb.; 1864, 150,539,306 lb.; and 1865, 129,761,817 lb.

FAMINE PRICES IN THE OLDEN TIME.—In the great famine of 1316, the parliament limited the price of provisions as follows:—An ox, 16s.; a cow, 12s.; a hog, two years old, 3s. 4d.; a sheep, unshorn, 1s. 8d.; if shorn, 1s. 2d.; a goose, 2d.; a capon, 2d.; a hen, 1d.; twenty-four eggs, 1d.; a quarter of wheat, beans, or peas, 20s.

PROTECTION OF TREES FROM INSECTS.—The following simple method of preserving fruit from the ravages of insects is recommended by the Imperial Society of Practical Horticulture of the Rhone, and by the director of the School of Arboriculture of the Parc de la Fête d'Or at Lyons. The quantity of fruit destroyed by insects that deposit their eggs in the blossoms is enormous. These creatures are said to have a great antipathy to vinegar, the mere odour of which is enough to drive them away, and, in some cases, to destroy them, and nothing more is required than to sprinkle the branches with a mixture of vinegar and water at the moment the blossoms begin to appear.

The mixture recommended consists of one part of vinegar to nine parts of water, but as French vinegar is very strong, perhaps the amount of water should be less when English vinegar is used. When the liquids are well mixed, the solution is to be sprinkled over the flower-buds by means of a garden-engine or syringe, or even with a watering-pot with a fine rose. M. Denis, the director of the school referred to, tried the experiment last year, and reports that fruit trees so treated were covered with fruit, while those to which the acidulated water was not applied bore scarcely any. The other remedy proposed is against ants and other insects which mount the stems of trees. Take common lamp-oil, and expose it in the sun for three or four days, or until it acquires a gummy consistency and very disagreeable smell, then with a small paint-brush paint around the tree at about two feet from the ground a band of the oil two inches wide, repeating the operation for three or four successive days. It is said that this method will protect the tree for four years at least. Perhaps coal tar might be found to answer the same purpose.

A PROFESSOR OF MIRTH AND JOLLITY.

MR. HAGEL, formerly an officer in the army, a cheerful, light-hearted young man of good descent, was by nature a speculative philanthropist, and being strongly impressed with the belief that if people were but happy, could be made universally and innocently light-hearted, they would be not only less evilly inclined, but more actively good. He therefore threw up his commission, and resolved to devote his life henceforth to the elevation of his native land, by means of amusement and recreation.

His first aim was, therefore, like most other moral reformers of the present day, to attract people away from the public-house by affording them novelty and merriment, and the means of self-forgetfulness, otherwise than in brandy and other ardent spirits. He introduced, therefore, all kinds of public games; got up rural entertainments; running and leaping matches; and introducing conjuring, in which he was an adept, he met with such success as to become a sort of national Professor of Legerdemain. He did all kinds of wonderful feats, skating on flowing water, and taught others to do the same, until continual dippings cooled the public ardour. He travelled about everywhere as the Father of Mirth and Jollity, the Prime Minister of Fun.

When he had rejuvenated, to the best of his ability, the elder members of society, he especially devoted himself to children, and became a wonderful favourite of the rising generation, not only in Sweden, but in Denmark, Finland, and Russia. He invited them and their parents to dances, and instituted harmless gingerbread weddings and sugar-plum lotteries.

So years went on with outward gaiety, but much wearing anxiety and inward grief—for the Wizard had a wife and children to support—besides which age and infirmity could not be warded off, and mirth often, as it were, mocked his misery instead of banishing his need. Yet, still a perfect fanatic in his belief, nothing could abate his desire to do good in this eccentric way.

He persevered in diverting others till his enfeebled frame was worn out, and, broken in spirits, he retired to this solitary and gloomy wood, where nothing remained to gladden him who had laboured so long to gladden others, except the loving care of his practical wife and daughters, and the recollection of all the poor and neglected children whom he had enchanted by the gratuitous exhibitions of his magical powers, and of all the destitute sufferers with whom he had freely shared his purse as long as a stiver remained in it. He never solicits aid; he is a melancholy man, yet he never regrets being the martyr of merriment.—*Twelve Months with Fredrika Bremer in Sweden. By Margaret Howitt.*

The heat in Paris is perfectly unbearable, yet owing to the war hardly any of the wealthier residents have gone out of town. The drive in the Bois is deserted in the afternoon, but is crowded morning and evening. The health of Paris is very bad.

The papers announce the birth of a daughter to Sir James Duke on the 18th ult. Sir James is seventy-three years of age, and he had one child, also a daughter, who was born two years ago. He is still without an heir to his baronetcy.

A CURIOUS weapon, called the non-recoil gun, has been invented by Mr. G. P. Harding. Its principle is simple and extremely peculiar. It is, in fact, a plain tube, without a breech, open at both ends. The shot is placed in the centre, a wad is placed behind it so as to confine the charge, and a second wad is placed at such a distance as to leave an air space behind the charge. There being no recoil from the gun, it is termed the non-recoil.



[THE PRIME MINISTER OF PRUSSIA.]

COUNT BISMARCK.

OTTO, COUNT VON BISMARCK, was born in 1814, a period, curiously enough, when those treaties were being framed which it was his destiny ultimately to destroy. His birthplace was Schönausen, on the river Elbe, the immediate neighbourhood of those very Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, the unjust seizure of which, by his advice, led to the present sanguinary war. Although untitled until recently, Bismarck sprang from a family so ancient and noble, that the House of Hohenzollern, of which King William of Prussia is the head, is but a mushroom by comparison, for the Bismarcks are lineally descended from one of the eminent chiefs of a powerful Slavonic tribe—hence, perhaps, the growth of those despotic, and, politically, unprincipled tendencies which have made his name the terror of Germany.

Ambitions for distinction at the very outset of his career, he chose the army for a profession, and thus entered as a volunteer in the infantry. His great, powerful, and restless brain, however, trained as it had been by his severe studies at the Universities of Göttingen, Berlin, and Grieswald, instinctively taught him that he was more fitted to be a leader of men, than a mere item in a system of pipeclay and buckram; hence, Bismarck retired from the army, and, while leading the life of a country gentleman, gave his mind to the study of history and politics, doubtless not omitting the study of Machiavelli, of whom, by the way, he has proved a promising pupil, and one of whom the author of the "Prince" would be proud.

In 1846, Bismarck became a member of the Diet of Saxony, and in the following year of the General Diet. In the latter place it was that he first distinguished himself, at least sufficiently to attract the

attention of the despotic Court of Prussia, by the singular vivacity of his language, and his irrepressible tendency to start some bold and audacious paradox, which he then maintained with remarkable vigour and ability. One of the theories which he expounded in this fashion was to the effect that large cities were centres of all that was mischievous and wrong—that they were obnoxious in the highest degree to the general welfare of nations, and ought to be destroyed as hotbeds of evil principles. The Revolution of 1848 had the effect of completely confirming Bismarck in his absolute tendencies. Thus showing his genius for good, or for evil, to Europe at large, the King of Prussia at once marked the rising statesman as one whose political views would be eminently acceptable to him, and, in 1851, invited him to enter the diplomatic service; and, further to mark his estimate of his value, shortly afterwards appointed him to the post of Prussian representative in the Diet of Frankfurt, at a time that his Majesty knew that most difficult and delicate questions were to be discussed and settled.

What great events from trivial causes spring. During that sitting in the Diet, the hitherto comparatively obscure country gentleman, it is supposed, met with an opposition that wounded his susceptibilities and irritated his dogmatic and overbearing temper; at all events, from that period may be dated his constant manifestations of enmity towards Austria, for henceforth Bismarck never lost an opportunity of declaring that Austria was not only the hereditary foe of Prussia, but a common source of danger to Germany and disquiet to the whole of Europe. It is true that the Prussian Liberals did not agree with these views, but Bismarck had hit his mark—they detested Austria more; and when, in 1862, Bismarck was sent to Vienna, and contributed largely to the exclusion of Austria from the Zollverein, organizing a systematic

opposition to Count Rechburg, and all propositions which emanated from him, the hatred of constitutional principles which has always distinguished the Prussian Minister was apparently forgiven, if not forgotten.

As we have recently shown, the main object of the present war—at least, as far as Prussia is concerned—is to create a vast united Germany, under the Imperial Sovereignty of Prussia, a design which has been seething in the minds of Prussian sovereigns and statesmen since the days of the first Frederick, and to his fame—honourable or otherwise—Bismarck has been the first to convert this theory into action. With the hatred of Hannibal for the Romans, Austria has been the *bête noir* of his life. But steadily and stealthily he has pursued his design.

In 1858 a remarkable pamphlet (without doubt dictated, if not written, by Bismarck) appeared, entitled "Prussia and the Italian Question," in which an alliance of Prussia, Russia, and France was advocated as the sure means of establishing a German Unity which should be at once safe and honourable, but, of course, to be under the guardian care of Prussia.

Thus (significantly) in the following year Bismarck went as Ambassador to St. Petersburg, and remained for three years at the Court of the Czar—with what result the development of present events may show. Again, and equally significantly, he went as Ambassador to Paris, and so, perhaps, up to a certain point, obtained a promised neutrality on the part of Louis Napoleon in the event of a war breaking out between Prussia and Austria. The amount of influence he obtained over the latter astute sovereign—who, by the way, decorated him with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour—time alone must show.

After a six months' sojourn at Paris, he was summoned to Berlin to officiate in the double capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Master of the King's Household, and from that moment his name has become a power in Europe.

At the time of his return to Prussia the country was a prey to internal conflict, the Lower House of the Legislature being in diametrical opposition to the King and Bismarck's absolutist scheme of strengthening the regular army at the cost of the Landwehr, or Militia. In this dispute, however, despotism conquered. The House was dismissed by the King at the instance of Bismarck, who remained in power, and further distinguished himself by his extreme rigour towards the press.

In 1863, however, an address was presented to the King, in which the Minister was charged with having violated the Constitution, but, of course, without injury to Bismarck. Again, in 1863, the House passed a vote of censure against him for concluding a secret treaty with Russia. Nothing daunted, however, he became even more inflexible and headstrong, and in 1865 openly set at defiance the constitutional rights and principles of the people.

In conclusion, we may add that Count Bismarck, probably the most remarkable minister of a despotic sovereign since Wolsey and Richelieu, is as personally unpopular as his daring policy, has, for the nonce, been successful. How unpopular he is, and at the same time how defiant, may be gathered from the following dialogue which a leading French paper asserts and believes took place at Berlin between the count and a distinguished Frenchman who had attacked his policy:—

"I know very well that I am as unpopular in France as I am in Germany. I am everywhere made responsible for a situation which I did not create, but which was pressed upon me, as it was upon everybody. I am the scapegoat of public opinion, but I don't much care. I strive, with a good conscience, after an object which I consider useful for both Prussia and Germany. As regards the means, I have employed such as offered themselves. There is a good deal to be said about the internal situation of Prussia. To be able to judge of this impartially, it is necessary to know, and study thoroughly, the peculiar character of the inhabitants of that country. While France and Italy form great social communities, animated by the same spirit and the same sentiments, in Germany individualism predominates. Every one lives for himself, with wife and children in his small corner, cherishing a theory of his own, always suspicious of his Government and his neighbours, and always judging by his own, and not by the general view. The sentiment of individualism, and the desire to contradict, are developed in Germany to an incredible extent. No Government will ever be popular in Prussia, whatever it may do. The great majority will always oppose. The fact of its being the Government, and acting authoritatively towards the individual, brings it into bad repute with the moderate party, and still more with the advanced section. Neither the Liberal nor the Reactionary Ministries have found favour with our politicians."

On being asked whether he did not think that the general dissatisfaction might produce a revolution, Bismarck replied:—"The Government does not think

that any revolution is to be expected, and it does not fear it. Our revolutionists are not so very formidable. Their hatred finds vent in a number of bad names given to the minister, but they respect the King. I am the guilty party from beginning to end, as it is I alone against whom they rave. With a little more impartiality they would see, perhaps, that I did not act differently, because it was impossible to act otherwise. In the present position of Prussia in Germany, and especially considering Austria, we wanted above all things an army. That is the only power in Prussia which can be disciplined. A Prussian who would get his arm smashed at a barricade would come home rather depressed; and get well scolded by his wife. In the army, however, he is a magnificent soldier, who fights like a lion for the honour of his country. Sixteen years ago, I lived quietly as a country gentleman, when the will of the (late) King called me to Frankfurt, as Minister to the Diet. I had been brought up in the admiration, I might say veneration, of the Austrian policy. But it did not take me long to get thoroughly disabused of my youthful illusions about Austria, and I became its firm antagonist. I did not know that I was over to play a part, but at that time, already, I conceived the plan which I now try to carry out, viz., to free Germany from the Austrian pressure,—that part of it, at least, which by spirit, religion, manners, and interest is closely allied with the fate of Prussia. To reach this goal I shall defy everything, even exile and the gallows. I once told the Crown Prince, who by education and tendencies is more the man of parliamentary government: 'What matters if they hang me, if only that ropes ties your throne more firmly to the fortunes of pure Germany.'

THE BAL MASQUE.

"A WOMAN'S vocation plainly is—to talk!"

"Merci! You remind me of an ancient remark about 'casting pearls.'"

They sat looking at each other very much like "two amiable tigers, who had not fully made up their minds as to the propriety of an encounter." Captain Westervelt was the first to recover himself.

"Pardon! I think you and I are of very inflammable materials, Miss Nina, for we have done nothing but quarrel during our acquaintance."

Vexed as she was, Miss Arundel could not suppress an amused smile, as she met the half-saucy, coolly-provoking eyes opposite her. So she bit her lips, and said nothing.

"But you haven't told me one half I want to know," said Captain Westervelt, eyeing her curiously. "My heart is bent upon really finding out your opinion. Miss Stanley is supposed to be your most intimate friend, and I don't hesitate to say that I am anxious to find out whether she is really engaged to Larry Graham. I have a very excited idea of the lady; has my friend Larry a ghost of a chance?"

The dainty white hands played idly among the brightly-coloured worsted, and Miss Arundel had completely regained her self-possession as she answered him.

"Engaged? Oh, no! Helen is just enough of a flirt to keep Mr. Graham 'twixt heaven and earth' for many a day yet. Pray, Captain Westervelt, what makes you so very curious about those two? I privately suspect you of a 'pumping system,' and must offer my congratulations upon the skilful manner in which you conduct it."

Certainly, Nina possessed the power of irritating him, for his keen eyes flashed.

Cecil Westervelt, whom his admirers had christened "the cool captain," was evidently playing a losing game with Miss Arundel.

"That's crushing!" he ejaculated, promptly. "I'd not dare to provoke you to use cold steel in this fashion. You know very well how much I admire Miss Stanley. I've talked of her so much to you, that I almost believe you think I am in love with her."

"Quite right. I do."

The instant the clear, cold words had left her lips Nina repented bitterly. She could have beaten herself with many stripes (and did mentally) for so utter a mistake—so bad a move on her chess-board. But she looked him fearlessly in the face, and saw the grey pallor steal up to his forehead as he caught his breath quickly.

"So! And I have been all this while finding out your real opinion of me?"

"Oh! do tell me what it is, I'm dying to know," cried a laughing voice from the door, as the speaker's jaunty figure stood on the threshold. "Bertie and I have been skating till I'm so tired, so have stopped to get something refreshing;" and Helen Stanley sank coquettishly down on a low stool at Miss Arundel's feet.

"Bertie's coming up," continued she; "you'll have time for that merciless opinion before he gets here, Captain Westervelt."

"Ah, Miss Helen!" he said, with a reflection of her

own merry smile, "I was merely going to remark that women always say what they mean, and mean what they say."

"Sphinx!" playfully, with a glance at the silent figure in the arm-chair, "I prefer a proper respect paid to my questions. What's your 'real opinion' of me, then?"

"The only woman I ever really loved!" clasping his hands with mock rapture, that sent Helen off into a peal of laughter. "How can you expect anything more lucid from a man in my state of mind?"

"Pray recover your equilibrium before Monday evening; which reminds me, Nina, that I want to ask you all about Mrs. Seymour's Bal Masque. Bertie!" as her cousin walked leisurely into the room, "please turn Queen's evidence, and divulge to us girls the redoubtable captain's costume."

"You give me credit for more knowledge than I ever had," said Bertie Gray, shaking hands heartily with his friend. "Cecil hasn't made me his confidant on the costume question. I imagine Nina knows, however! I say, Cecil, wouldn't it be a fine idea for you and I to change dresses at the last moment, just to puzzle and annoy these girls? As for Miss Nina there, I'm sure I'd know the turn of her head through any mask whatever."

"Great wisdom you would display in changing your costumes, Bertie," said Miss Arundel, quietly. "You quite forget that only the ladies are allowed masks."

"Too true, alas! for my *chateau de France*! Cecil, I don't want to carry you off, but my horses are at the door, and there's time for a drive down the Avenue before Helen gets through her 'confidential' to Miss Nina."

Captain Westervelt rose. He was too well-bred to attempt an aside, strongly tempted as he was to do so; for his quick, passionate heart was too full of anger to allow him to leave Nina without a desire to make her feel the weight of his displeasure. But the "cool captain" knew the proud spirit he had to deal with, so he bowed a graceful "good morning," and followed Bertie down the staircase.

When Helen turned to look at her friend, she saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"Why, Nina," she ejaculated, "what has happened?"

Of course, that was the very last thing which lay in poor Nina's power to tell her. She was so utterly ashamed of herself that she wanted to run away and hide, or do something equally absurd. So she contrived to laugh off the question, and turned the subject to one less personal.

"Do you know, Helen," said she, "an idea struck me, a moment ago, in regard to the ball? What do you say to changing costumes with me? It would afford us much fun, I fancy. We are so nearly the same height and figure, that I am sure we can carry it out successfully."

Helen jumped from her seat in ecstatic delight.

"The very thing, my dear creature. Why didn't it occur to me before? Being masked, we can do it so nicely; and—Oh, dear me, Nina, if Captain Westervelt has your companion character—as he privately told me last night—I am just positive I could never put on your cold dignity to him."

"Yes," thought Miss Arundel, bitterly, "he will have an excellent opportunity there for private conversation!"

But she said, "Nonsense, Helen! I can arrange it. You and Bertie can meet here, and we girls will be all cloaked and masked when the gentlemen come. Then, after we arrive at Mrs. Seymour's, they will only be able to know us by our costumes. So, consider it all settled, dear; you go as 'fair Amy Robsart,' with Captain Westervelt as the Earl, and I, in your dress of a French marquise. How well Bertie will look in the Louis Quatorze style!"

So Nina Arundel sat chatting for more than an hour with her friend, and not a word escaped her of the dull, cold pain at her heart. She would have been so glad of a little sympathy, but instinctive delicacy kept her from telling Helen of the insult she had used her name to cover. After awhile Bertie came, and Helen, bidding her a loving good-by, was whirled down the Avenue.

Nina Arundel was a very proud girl, and carried her cold self-possession almost to a fault. Cecil Westervelt had been for a long time past paying her most marked attentions, in his own peculiar, cool way; and before she was well aware of the fact, she felt that he was her master.

And now, for a mere passing pique, to have roused him to a pitch of anger she had never known before, was hard for the girl to bear.

But Nina's own nobler self did not desert her in the present emergency.

The struggle with her pride was a hard one, but she finally resolved that it was her absolute duty, no matter how humiliating, to apologize frankly, and rely upon his generosity.

Having once come to that conclusion, she waited patiently for the captain to call.

Friday, Saturday: no well-known ring, no quick, military tread on the stairs.

Sunday night, Nina's pride deserted her—as that treacherous demon is wont to do when most required—and the woman's heart asserted itself in passionate sorrow.

The last night of the old year! What a crowd of old, sad memories floated through the lonely girl's mind.

A violent nervous headache was the result of her midnight vigil; and New-Year's morning Mrs. Arundel quietly told her that she had better deny herself to visitors that day, if she expected to attend the Bal Masque.

So Nina yielded, with a half-sigh, and hid her tears on her pillows.

Her maid reported, during the day, that Captain Westervelt had called; but she got no satisfactory news of him until her mother came up with the superb flowers which his card accompanied.

"How kind!" thought the girl, as she bent half lovingly over the exotics; "but I suppose I ought to give them to Helen. No! I will not; nobody shall carry his flowers but me!" and with heightened colour Miss Arundel passed into the hands of her hair-dresser.

Very lovely, indeed, she looked as she stood, in costume, waiting for Helen. The antique court dress, and powdered hair became her well. Here was that rare and peculiar beauty, "*blonde aux yeux noirs*;" rare, and yet so thoroughly bewitching.

Fortunately, when Captain Westervelt entered, Helen and she had just tied on their masks, and, fearful of close questioning, the girls hurried the gentlemen out into the carriages.

Now, in one part of their grand plan, they had totally forgotten to bind Bertie over to keep silence; and as Nina's hand lay against the dark cushions of the carriage, the quick-sighted fellow caught a glimpse of her well-known seal-ring.

The clue once given, he easily detected her disguised voice; and as she drew on her gloves and hid the tell-tale ring, Mr. Bertie's handsome eyes danced with mischievous mischief, and he whistled softly to himself, "*Hal checkmate!*"

Mrs. Seymour's elegant house presented a lively and grotesque appearance as the quartette came down stairs. Captain Westervelt, as the Earl of Leicester, fairly blazed with jewels; and Helen Stanley, brimming with fun and mischief, enjoyed intensely the deception she was playing. The tricky spirit very nearly laughed outright as she thought,

"Good heavens! if he should go and make love to her for Nina!"

However, after the third dance, the gallant captain relieved her of further anxiety by departing "to find Miss Stanley." Truth to tell, Helen was rather glad to have him go, being seized with a frantic desire to go and torment Larry Graham, whom she had just discovered in the crowd. Miss Arundel had been dancing, and was in the midst of an animated conversation, when a voice behind her said:

"Madame la Marquise!"

Had not the mask been a kind friend, he might have seen the girl grow pale; but she only said a laughing sentence in French, to sustain her part, as she took his arm.

"Come, Miss Helen," said he, lightly, "you and I can have a chat in the conservatory."

"A flirtation, Captain Westervelt, no! What will numerous dowagers say to all that?" said Nina, assuming Helen's very gesture so well that she was surprised at herself.

"You and I are past flirting, are we not? Now, if it were your friend there, Miss Arundel!" and, despite her mask, Nina felt the keen glance that seemed to look her through.

"Well! What if it were?" she answered, indifferently. "Nina understands herself about as well as any girl I know."

"Are you quite sure of that? I sometimes doubt whether she is not an enigma to herself. Do help us to read a little of what she keeps so carefully concealed."

Here was a pleasant situation! To sustain Helen's usual style, Nina knew she must be enthusiastic in her own praises; and then if, some day, he should find her out! Besides, she really wanted to make her apology, and here was a fitting opportunity. All this, and much more, flew through her brain as she answered:

"An exposition of Nina? Now that's a modest request. Talk about women's curiosity. Experience has taught me that men's is infinitely more keen when once roused. As for Nina, she is warm-hearted and affectionate, proud to a fault, and too self-possessed for her own peace of mind;" and an unconscious sigh just reached the ears of the listener.

"Miss Arundel and I have had some pretty keen

encounters, and I find I always have to stand on guard with her. I'll own to you, Miss Helen, that I have tried for some time to find a weak place in the armour. I think we now may do some execution, with the small sword, in a rough sort of way; but for those keen thrusts, under the guard, that drain your life-blood before you know you're hit—commend me to a woman; or rather, give her a name, and call her Miss Arundel!"

She was cut to the very quick; and in the dim, soft light of the conservatory, he saw her hand tremble as she raised it to her mask.

"Stop, Captain Westervelt," she said, with a sob, as she lifted her pale face towards him, "let me end this very senseless deception by making you a necessary apology for a most uncalculated and unlady-like remark the last time we met. I was very wrong; and, for the first time, Cecil Westervelt saw the proud eyes droop before his own. She looked at him as she made her little speech, and expected to see, at least, a flash of surprise as she raised her mask. But she did not yet know the "cool captain"—he was as coldly impassable as ever.

"Do not say more," he said, very gently. "I hardly thought you could have intended the full bitterness of your tone and words. Would you mind very much telling me what prompted you to say such a thing?"

"I think it was—pique, perhaps," she said, very slowly, not looking at him as she spoke.

"Pique?" in a tone of undisguised surprise. "What had I done? Was it offence at any previous remark?"

She hesitated. How could she tell him that his constant allusions to Helen had annoyed her beyond bearing? No, anything rather than have him think that; so she said, rather proudly:

"I do not esteem that a perfectly fair question." His eyes fairly lit up; he bent over her and whispered:

"Is it because you think that if you say, frankly, you disliked my constant talking of Miss Stanley, you fear I may 'lay the flattering unction to my soul' that you love me? Do not think of me so meanly, or imagine my vanity so great. Be your frank, noble self, and consider me an honourable man."

The hand she extended to him trembled; but she smiled her own proud, beautiful smile, as she said, with a strong effort:

"You are right. I will not be afraid of your misunderstanding me."

He had compelled her to say the words out bravely; and a rough smile lurked under Cecil Westervelt's silky moustache as he said, "Nina, it is not the fear—it is the truth!"

Over the girl's face and neck came the warm crimson tide, even the delicate ears were pink in her utter humiliation. For a moment the feeling of misery was intense; then she was quietly and comfortably taken into a pair of strong arms, and Cecil's voice said, over so tenderly:

"How cruel I am! Nina, if you had not really loved me, you had read my secret long ago."

"You were so unkind," she whispered, trying to regain her wonted composure, and failing miserably. "How could you talk of me so unfairly to Helen, as you supposed?"

"Supposed!" and the much amused laugh rang blithely out. "You silly child! I knew you from the very first moment; and, to crown the whole, Bertie told me slyly, up stairs, that he discovered you in the carriage. And, Miss Nina, just to punish you, I'll inform you that Larry Graham and Miss Stanley have been engaged for a week; and I, made a confidant of the lady in regard to a certain dear little somebody," animated by play, best recorded thus—, "and I coaxed Miss Stanley not to tell you, poor victim! Dear, just make 1866 the very happiest of New Years for me, by promising to forgive and forget my hard test of your feelings, and make yourself over to my keeping as soon as possible."

The answer he received was not intended for publication; but the *beau monde* are just now talking briskly over "that brilliant wedding," and nobody knows but the privileged "we" that it was the result of Miss Arundel's *Bal Masque*. D. V.

News from Naples states that Vesuvius is showing signs of greater disturbance than has been the case for two years.

The consumption of petroleum in Europe, in 1864, was 30,000,000 gallons, against 16,000,000 in 1862; the probable consumption in 1866 is estimated at 90,000,000 gallons.

A new minor planet, the 87th of the group between Mars and Jupiter was discovered on the night of the 16th ult., by Mr. N. R. Pogson, the government astronomer, at the Royal Observatory, Madras.

The Duke of Sutherland, it is said, has offered a prize of 100*l.* to whosoever shall scale Sutherland

House in an aerial machine not inflated with gas. We presume this does not allude to machines projected from the area, or it could soon be done on the ramoneur principle. If any one has the courage to hang on to the tail of a big kite and drop on the tiles the trick will be done.

TEMPTATION.

By J. F. SMITH.

Author of "The Will and the Way," "Woman and her Master," &c., &c.

CHAPTER LVII.

Cunning is blinded by the thirst of gold,
And avarice falls into the simple snare
Which childhood might avoid. Old Play.

The clever Mr. Griffiths had entered his lodgings at his accustomed hour, bade good night to his landlady, and, to all appearance—retired to rest as usual. We say to all appearance, for nothing was further from his intentions than indulging in the luxury of sleep on the present occasion.

After carefully securing the door of his chamber, he opened an old portmanteau, which he took from under the bed, and took from it a slouched hat, a long black great-coat, and an enormous white cravat, which he placed upon a chair, and contemplated for several minutes in silence.

"The best speculation I ever made!" he muttered at last with one of his peculiar chuckles. "Talk of the usurer's gains—mine far exceed them! With no greater outlay than thirty shillings expended with the Jew clothesman, I cleared fifteen hundred pounds, and the articles are as good as over! No bad investment. They shall bring me as much more before I have done with them! What can Sir Richard want with me?" he added. "Perhaps he has discovered that the real will—but no! that is impossible! Where handwriting and seals are concerned I could deceive the Father of Lies himself, thanks to the instructions of my respected parent!"

Slowly he began to attire himself for the rendezvous which he had made, as he imagined, with the baronet; and so confident did he feel, that not a shade or doubt of misgiving once crossed his mind.

By the time he had carefully completed his toilette, the little Dutch clock by the side of the bed had struck eleven. Mr. Griffiths cautiously opened the door of the room and listened. All was still; his landlady and her two daughters had retired to rest.

Stealthily he descended the stairs, let himself out of the house by a back door which opened into a narrow court, and soon found himself in the street. With rapid steps he made his way towards the Strand. The only person he noticed on emerging from his lodgings was a porter, seated directly opposite the house, upon a large trunk. He had evidently stopped to rest himself.

Still the clerk began to think it somewhat strange that the man should be going exactly in the same direction as himself; but just as he began to feel a little uneasy upon the subject, he turned off towards Charing Cross, whilst he pursued his way down Parliament Street.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered; "startled at my own shadow—and yet it is requisite to be cautious! Precaution, they say, is the mother of safety! I might as well torment myself about the groom who is sitting on the opposite side of the way, and suspect him to be a spy upon me! Spy," he repeated. "Who should not a spy upon me? Not Sir Richard—he does not know me from Adam; and my whereabouts can't interest any one else!"

With this reflection he proceeded towards the Abbey. The groom turning off into Downing Street dissipated his last doubts. He remembered how on the previous occasion he had experienced the same misgivings, and the unnecessary pains he had taken to avoid persons who were perfectly unconscious of the suspicions their presence created.

As the disguised clerk turned into the Dean's Yard a hackney-coach drove rapidly past. He paused, and walked back a few steps to gaze after it.

"All right!" he thought, as the sound of the wheels died away. "I defy the police and Satan himself to trace me now!"

Like most boasts, it was a vainglorious one. The parties he named had kept a closer eye upon his proceedings than he imagined.

This time there was no friendly moon to illumine the cloisters, which were dark as the fabled pit of Acheron, save where a dirty oil lamp or two shed a dim, flickering light through the wire, basket-like cages in which they were suspended—a precaution which did not always secure them from the mischief-loving propensities of the Westminster boys.

Mr. Griffiths made his way cautiously towards the spot where he had formerly met the baronet, and, seat-

ing himself upon the stone bench, he patiently awaited his arrival.

He had not been upon his post more than a quarter of an hour before he heard a quick, firm step advancing towards him. Had it been a slow and cautious one, in all probability his suspicions would have been excited.

"Is that you, Sir Richard?" he said, as the party drew near.

"Hush!"

"Oh, there is no danger of interruption!" continued the clerk. "We are alone, and know each other!"

"Perfectly!" replied a voice which made him start.

The next instant a pair of arms were thrown around him, and he felt himself pinioned in a grasp of iron. Vainly the guilty wretch struggled to free himself, or to disengage the weapon which he carried from his girdle. His efforts were as useless as those of an infant in the hands of a giant.

"Let me go, Mr. Clement!" he said; "you have no right to detain me!"

"I will make one then!" replied our hero.

The footsteps of several persons were heard rapidly approaching the spot.

Mr. Griffiths descended to the most abject entreaties, promising, if his young master would only let him go; that in the morning he would explain everything. "Besides," he added, "you have no warrant to arrest me!"

"But I have!" observed one of the party who by this time surrounded him; "a moment longer, sir, just till I draw his sting, if he has one, and place the handcuffs on him!"

With a dexterity which only long practice could have given him, the speaker, who was one of the old Bow Street detectives, slipped his hands up the coat of the prisoner, and removed from his person a pistol, which proved on examination to be loaded. He next slipped the iron bracelets, as he called them, over his wrists; and in less time than it has taken to describe the transaction, the now detected felon stood disarmed and secured.

"This conduct is infamous!" he said, affecting an air of injured innocence; "what charge have you against me?"

"All in good time!" replied the well-known voice of Mr. Foster, senior.

"I have a right to know," continued the clerk.

"Can't I come here to meet—"

He hesitated: for once he was not ready.

"Meet whom?" demanded Clement.

"My sweetheart!" answered the prisoner; "without being followed like a thief and treated in this way!"

"Because you are a thief!" replied the lawyer, indignantly. "Where is the packet which you purloined from my private office?"

"Ask your son!" replied the clerk, with a sneer.

"Villain!" exclaimed our hero; "dare you accuse me of taking it?"

"Young men will gamble!" was the answer.

"Patience, my boy!" said his father, fearful lest scorn and insulted honour should urge the young soldier to forget himself; "the serpent's fang is drawn—he sold it to Sir Richard Trevanian!"

"That you must prove!" observed Mr. Griffiths, coolly; "to-night is your turn, but to-morrow may be mine! I am not so entirely at your mercy as you imagine!"

That same evening he slept in prison, whilst Clement Foster and his parent returned to the house of Miss Mendez, to inform her of all that had taken place.

When brought to Bow Street on the following morning, the prisoner defended himself with consummate skill and effrontery—not only denying all knowledge of the packet, but expressing his conviction that our hero had taken it: which shameless assertion he justified by relating the offer he had overheard Stork, the money-lender, make respecting it. The magistrate's opinion was shaken, and it was not without some difficulty that he granted even a remand. Poor Clement was in despair; the fair name of which he was so justly proud, seemed likely to be tarnished for ever.

His only hope was in Martha, and the influence she possessed over the fears of Mr. Stork.

No sooner was that warm-hearted friend acquainted with the new difficulty, than she offered at once to accompany the lawyer and his son to the house of her grandfather's former partner: his evidence she knew would clear her young favourite from all participation in the crime, and bring the guilt home to the perpetrator and receiver.

"To the perpetrator, possibly!" observed Mr. Foster, with a sigh; "but the receiver is already beyond the arm of human justice—Sir Richard Trevanian died last night!"

He pointed as he spoke to one of the daily papers lying on the table. Martha took it up, and found that the intelligence was but too certain—a fit of apoplexy had cut short his career of crime, his hopes and fears.

His son was now Sir Walter Trevanian.

More bitterly than ever did the lawyer regret the loss of the deed—for the moment had arrived when, by the direction of the testator, he was to break the seals: it seemed as if accident and man alike conspired to baffle justice and aid the cause of crime.

On arriving at the house of the money-lender, it was not without some difficulty that the party obtained an entrance: the old man was on his death-bed, and a crowd of hungry relatives, whom he had kept at a distance whilst in health, had gathered round him, despite his curses and imprecations on their officiousness, eager to share in the spoil.

His two eldest nephews were tormenting him with questions respecting his idol, gold, when Mr. Foster entered the room, followed by his companions.

"Gold!" repeated Stork, in a feeble tone; "all the world is mad on the subject of my gold! I tell you that I have none! I am poor—miserably poor! You will have to bury me amongst you, or else apply to the parish!"

"Nonsense, uncle!" exclaimed the elder of the two men; "we know better than that!"

The dying man uttered a groan of impatience.

"Come," added the speaker, in a coaxing tone, "you may just as well let us know where it is—you can't take it with you: it will save a great deal of trouble after you are gone!"

"Not a penny!" shouted Stork, his evil passions roused by their importunity; "not a farthing! Hungry cures—wolves that you are—what brings you here? I never sent for you!"

The second nephew, who had hitherto been silent, muttered something about duty and affection.

"Duty and affection, then, reward you!" replied the money-lender; "for not a shilling will one of you ever inherit! I have taken care of that!" he added with a chuckle; "I have taken care of that! I have disappointed—"

The words which were about to follow appeared to be suddenly frozen upon his thin, parchment-like lips—for his eyes had fallen upon the pale features of Martha, as she stood contemplating the painful scene at the opposite end of the room.

"What does she do here?" he shrieked; "they cannot touch me now! I am dying—and death pays every debt! Take her away!" he added, clenching at the hands of his affectionate relatives, who still maintained their position at his bed-side; "she comes to denounce me—to drag me to justice! Remove her, and the gold shall be yours!"

The two nephews, who for a far less sum than the amount the speaker promised would willingly have bartered their eternal welfare, eagerly arose from their seats to comply with his request.

"Back!" exclaimed Martha, in a commanding tone; "one word from my lips, and even the wretched bed on which the expiring wretch now writhes in all the terrors of approaching death, ceases to be his!"

"False!" shouted Stork; "I am not a felon—they can't rob me of my gold! Drive her away—drive her away!"

Regardless of the scowling looks of the two nephews, who were awed by the presence of her companions, the grand-daughter of Peter Quin advanced to the side of the bed, and solemnly adjured the dying man to answer if he had not been paid the thousand pounds by Clement Foster on his coming of age, and whether he had not rejected with disdain the offer of abstracting the deed from his father's chambers.

"No—no! He did take it!" answered the money-lender, with a look of malice; "you can't frighten me now! I am dying—beyond your reach!"

"But not the reach of God!" solemnly observed Martha; "who reads the heart—who needs no proof—no witness—no confession: whose hand is even now upon you! Will you then die," she added, "with a lie upon your lips? Remember the stain of blood is on your soul—for years it has cried for justice: if not in this world, it must be answered in the next! Know you not the doom reserved for the murderer?"

Stork groaned and writhed in all the terrors of an awakened conscience.

With an eloquence which till that hour neither Clement nor the lawyer suspected her of possessing, she proceeded to pray—to call upon heaven to touch the heart of the dying sinner—to send forth the spirit of penitence and atonement—and concluded by painting the joy which follows true repentance.

Touched by her words, the wretched money-lender declared that he would confess, and demanded some one to go for a magistrate.

In less than an hour Clement brought one to his bed-side, and every one except the lawyer and the minister of justice retired.

"Your vindication, my dear boy, is most complete!" whispered Mr. Foster, as he pressed the hand of his son, after having seen the last of the money-lender; "he has confessed everything!"

"Everything?" repeated Martha, with a searching look.

The old gentleman inclined his head in answer to her question, and during the ride home not another word was exchanged between them. Our hero was puzzled to account for this singular conduct, and as they left Harley Street together, demanded an explanation of his father.

"It is a most painful one!" replied the lawyer, "and one that I could wish had not been made! You have heard me speak of the son of General Maitland?"

"Who disappeared so unaccountably?"

"He was murdered by Stork and Miles, assisted by a man whom they knew only by the name of The Captain, at the instigation of Peter Quin, the grand-father of Martha!"

"And the wretch confessed this?" demanded Clement, anxiously.

"More—he has described the exact spot in which the remains of the murdered George Maitland were concealed. I regret to say it is one of the houses in the Almonry, the property of Miss Mendez!"

"Painful, no doubt!" observed the young man; "but the discovery cannot affect her?"

"Legally, no!" replied the old man, with a sigh; "morally, yes! The world is a harsh judge, and visits the sins of the father upon the children!"

Captain Foster felt no less pained than surprised, and began to reflect what might be the feelings of his parent when he should learn that he was attached to the grand-daughter of a murderer.

CHAPTER LVIII.

This conscience doth make cowards of us all.
Shakespeare.

On quitting his father, Clement Foster proceeded at once to the Clarendon Hotel, where his friend Lord Peapod had taken up his abode, under an assumed name—being anxious to keep the fact of his having escaped the death so traitorously intended for him a secret till he should be convalescent: even to our hero he did not enter into any explanation of his motives—but an author may be more confidential with his readers. His lordship wished to punish his unnatural uncle, whom he shrewdly suspected of being no stranger to the murderous attempt of his servant Peter.

"I thought you had forgotten me, Clem!" exclaimed the peer, as he shook the hand of his only visitor. "Peace appears but a stupid affair after the excitement of a campaign like ours! I suppose we shall gradually grow as cold and politely indifferent towards each other as though we had never slept under the same tent!"

"If I thought that," replied our hero, "I should regret the peace as much as you do! Come, Peapod—I beg pardon, Major Jones!" he added—the name his lordship passed by in the hotel—"you have some reason to complain of me—and yet I am more to be pitied than blamed!"

"No tidings of Louise?"

"None!"

"Nor of her mysterious protectress, the Queen of Sheba?"—by which title the speaker meant to designate Madame Krudner, the Swedish ambassadress at the court of France—"who predicted—"

"I am tired," interrupted his friend, in a desponding tone, "of being made the sport of fate! No sooner do I extricate myself from one difficulty, than my evil destiny plunges me into another! Would that I possessed your easy philosophy—your happy indifference!"

"No you don't, Clem!" replied the peer, with a faint smile; "they would destroy you in less than a year—kill you with inanition! Do you know," he added, "that since I have suffered so severely and been left so much alone—I didn't mean that as a reproach—I begin to feel disgusted with the world—and still more with myself! At times I am half inclined to let my uncle retain my title and fortune, and seek for excitement in a life of adventure!"

"Which you would tire of in less time than you gave me!" observed his visitor; "you are hipped, my dear fellow!"

"On the contrary," said his lordship; "I have been amusing myself, and I'll bet— But I forget—you never tell! Well, then, as I defy you to guess how, I may as well tell you at once—I have been making my will!"

"Time enough for that," replied Clement, with a laugh, "when you have half a dozen children round you!"

"I shall never marry!" was the reply.

It was in vain that our hero attempted to rally his friend out of his sombre humour—salutes which a few months previous would have set him in a roar of mirth, scarcely drew from him the faintest smile: he had determined to be dull—and for once most religiously adhered to his resolution.

During the dinner—for the friends passed the rest of the day together—the hum of many voices, which rose occasionally into cheers, or died away in peals of merry

laughter, was heard in the apartment directly underneath the one occupied by the invalid.

"Whom have you below?" he inquired of one of the waiters, who found time to answer his bell at last; "and bring the three bottles of red claret!"

"Lord Peapod and his friends!" replied the man. "Magnificent spread—turkey and two of the finest haunches of the season—ortolans from France—boar's head from Germany—no expense spared! His lordship desired, when he gave the order, to have the most sumptuous dinner the establishment could place upon the table! I wish, gentlemen, you could have seen it!"

"Do you!" said the pretended Major Jones, drily.

"Any further orders, gentlemen?"

The waiter was told that he might retire. Our hero felt annoyed at the *contretemps*; he feared the effect it might produce upon the excitable temperament of his friend, who sat for some time after their informant had quitted the room in moody silence, from which he was suddenly roused by a tremendous cheer and the jangling of glasses.

"They appear very merry!" he exclaimed, in a tone of bitterness; "am I not right, Clem? Would it not be cruel to return to life and destroy so much happiness? My worthy uncle is doubtless listening to an eulogy upon his own virtues—modestly smiling, no doubt, at the comparison which some jackall has drawn between the late and present Lord Peapod!"

"You are in error!" replied his friend, soothingly; "it was the health of the Regent which they drank! Your uncle's turn has not come yet!"

"You are right!" said his lordship, after listening for a few seconds; "there is Marshall roaring out 'God save the King!' I shall be in time."

"In time! In time for what?" demanded his friend, "To return thanks when my health is drunk!" answered the invalid, drily.

"For heaven's sake, my dear fellow, be cool!"

"Cool!" repeated Peapod; "I am as cool as if the blood in my veins had been iced instead of the claret, which I have barely sipped! Help me on with my uniform! By heavens!" he added, with a laugh which rang through the apartment with the merry tone of former times, "I would not miss the scene—the confusion my appearance will throw them into—to exchange my coronet of viscount for that of a duke! Not that, *entre nous*, Clem, I set much value upon either!"

Finding that remonstrance only increased his excitement and rendered him more obstinate, our hero yielded to his caprice, and assisted him to exchange the dressing-gown in which he had dined for his full-dress uniform.

"Come!" said the peer, surveying himself in the glass, "for a dead man I don't look so very badly. Ten to one that you see paler faces than mine in the room when I make my appearance amongst them! Note them, Clem!" he whispered; "and, above all, note the features of my uncle and his dear friend Marshall! You know what Hamlet says!"

This was the plainest allusion which the speaker ever made to the suspicions which they both entertained of the colonel and his confederate.

When they reached the apartment in which the dinner was given, they found the door open. Fortunately, a screen at the back of the president's chair enabled them to hear every word that was uttered without being seen.

Marshall was on his legs—to use a technical phrase—when they reached the scene. With the modesty so peculiar to the man, he claimed the indulgence of the guests whilst he proposed the health of their noble host whom he described as the possessor of every virtue under the sun—spoke of his courage, eloquence, and single-heartedness—and only ceased enumerating the catalogue of his merits for want of breath. At every pause in his discourse, there was a general chorus of "Hear—hear!"

They could not do less for a man who gave such excellent dinners.

"Why, the fellow lies like an epitaph!" observed Clement Foster to his friend.

"The orator is about to conclude!" replied his lordship.

Marshall having exhausted every form of flattery, as well as the entire stock both of real and imaginary virtues, finished his speech by calling upon the guests to drink the health of Lord Peapod, "than whom," he added, "a braver and a better man, a more loyal soldier, or a truer gentleman, never existed!"

The health was drunk with the usual amount of enthusiasm, as a matter of course; and as soon as the applause had subsided, there was a gentle hum of expectation; the donor of the feast was about to return thanks.

"Now is my time, Clem!" whispered the real peer, and, with an air of the greatest unconcern, he walked into the room.

His uncle, who had already risen from his chair, having his back to the screen, was the last person to

perceive him, and to many who were present he was personally a stranger; added to which, his illness had so altered him, that it was not till he spoke that even his brother officers, many of whom were present, recognized him.

"Very handsome indeed, Marshall!" he said, at the same time coolly taking the glass of wine from the hand of his uncle; "more than I expected from you! When I require an epitaph, you shall write me one!"

(To be continued.)

LIVING IN GLASS HOUSES.

"Why were you not at Elliot's last night, Mrs. Lyman?" asked Mrs. Fortesque, as the ladies happened to meet on a morning visit at Mrs. Appleton's.

"We do not visit," replied Mrs. Lyman, with a shade of mortification passing over her countenance.

"Not visit!" repeated her friend in an accent of surprise, and fixing her eyes as she spoke, with a prolonged look of astonishment that caused Mrs. Lyman to colour. "Indeed! It was an elegant party, the handsomest I have been at this winter. Indeed, the party of the season."

"It could scarcely surpass Rawley's," said Mrs. Lyman, with smothered indignation. "I am sure there was nothing spared there that wealth could procure, and their house is larger than Elliot's."

"Yes, but it was such a jam at Rawley's," said Mrs. Fortesque, in the tone of one absolutely oppressed and disgusted by the recollection of the crowd. "Such a *melée* of people! and all sorts of people, too. This paying off party debts in that manner is, in my opinion, very vulgar. Now, at Elliot's it was so different. Just everyone you would wish to meet and no more. One really feels it a compliment to be asked to such a party! There was room to see everything, and the ladies were beautifully dressed. No crowd; everything *recherché* and elegant."

"The dressing at Rawley's was elegant," remarked Mrs. Ryman, evidently piqued that the party she had just been describing to Miss Appleton with no small degree of complacency as so superb, should now be spoken of as a *melée*.

"Did you think so?" said Mrs. Fortesque, with affected surprise. "It was very inferior to that of last night. Indeed, in such a crowd there's no inducement to wear anything handsome. But last night the ladies really came out! I never saw such dressing! And then the supper! It was exquisite!" and then Mrs. Fortesque paused, as if words failed to picture forth the magnificence of the scene.

"It seems to me that all suppers are alike," said one of the Miss Appletons, with true girlish ignorance.

"Oh, my dear!" exclaimed both the ladies at once. "The difference between such a supper as we had last night at Elliot's and such a one as we had even at Rawley's," continued Mrs. Fortesque, "is immense. The exquisite china, the plate, and then the natural flowers—such a supper as you can only serve for a select party."

Mrs. Lyman looked very angry. The Rawleys were rather her grand people; and as she had not been at Elliot's, she did not like this being set down in the crowd of anybody's invite.

"I am fairly tired out," continued Mrs. Fortesque, with some affectation of languor, "with this succession of parties. I do wish people would be quiet a little while and let one rest. The girls too are quite jaded and fagged with dancing night after night so."

"Oh, it's too much," said Emma Appleton. "I never go to more than two or three a week. I wonder you do," turning to Mrs. Fortesque.

"How can you help it, my dear?" said Mrs. Fortesque, in the tone of one bawling a great hardship. "You give such offence if you decline."

"I decline whenever it suits me," replied Miss Appleton, "and people bear the disappointment very philosophically," she added, smiling.

"You may well say that, Emma," said Mrs. Lyman, with an emphasis meant at Mrs. Fortesque. "Society is so large now, that I, at least, never find offence taken when I decline."

"But you cannot decline a first invitation," persisted Mrs. Fortesque. "Now the Elliotts, for instance. They have just called upon us—we could not refuse. Are you going to Hammersley's to-morrow, Emma?"

"No," said Emma, "we are not invited. Are you?"

"Yes. It's a small party," replied Mrs. Fortesque. "We shall go there first and afterwards to Lascelle's."

"I saw you all at the Opera on Monday," continued Emma.

"Yes," she replied. "We were there the first two acts. We went to Mason's from there. By the way, did you call on the bride, yesterday?"

"No," said Emma. "I have never visited the Halsleys."

"But as Hamilton's friend?" pursued Mrs. Fortesque. "I called on his account."

"No," said Emma, carelessly. "I hate bridal receptions, and avoid them whenever I possibly can." Mrs. Fortesque had risen as she was speaking, and she continued, "Oh, don't go. Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I must, my dear," replied Mrs. Fortesque. "This is Thorpy's and Ringold's reception day, and then I must call at Meredith's. I have not been there since the party—and Cadwalader's too. "Mary," she said, turning to her daughter, "don't forget them. We have been owing that visit so long, and Harrison's, and I don't know how many," she continued, as if quite oppressed by the weight of her fashionable cares. "I don't suppose we shall get through with the half of them. Come, Mary," and so bidding Emma and her friends good morning, she withdrew.

The door had hardly closed upon her, when Mrs. Lyman, still wrathful at the manner in which Mrs. Fortesque had spoken of the Rawleys, and angrier still at finding she was going to Hammersley's, let off some of her indignation, exclaiming—"How that woman does work for society!"

"One would think she had been at court to hear her talk of Elliot's," said Emma, laughing.

"Just so, Emma!" said Mrs. Lyman, in a tone of bitter satisfaction at her young friend's laughing satire. "It's too absurd! Just as if there is any particular distinction in going to Elliot's. And as to saying they called first, I don't believe it. They, strangers here! and people of their fortune and consequence are not likely to go about making first calls."

"What's that?" said Charlotte Appleton, who had been engrossed in conversation with a gentleman on the opposite side of the room during this discussion. "What's that about the Elliotts making first calls?"

"I was saying that it was rather remarkable that they should have called first on Mrs. Fortesque," replied Mrs. Lyman.

"But they did not," said Charlotte. "Of course, as strangers, you know they would not, Mrs. Lyman. And I know that the Fortesques called some time ago."

"Are you sure of that, Charlotte?" asked Mrs. Lyman, with the triumphant manner of one securing an important secret.

"Certainly," replied Charlotte, "for she asked mamma and myself to call and introduce her, which we did. You know we are intimate with the Elliotts. I am sorry we were prevented from going there the other night."

"I thought so!" said Mrs. Lyman, exultingly. "It's just like her!"

"There's no reason why she should not have called, Mrs. Lyman," said Emma.

Mrs. Lyman did not look assent to this. She merely said, however:

"Perhaps so; but I don't like calling on these rich people for their parties—for it amounts to that—when you cannot return them."

"But, my dear Mrs. Lyman," said Emma, "then only the rich would know the rich: and there are a great many charming people in society who cannot afford to entertain, and whom the Elliotts and others are delighted to have at their houses."

"Oh, my dear," returned the lady, with much excitement of manner, "that's all very well where you have happened to know them; but I mean, I would not go out of my way to call on them, and court their acquaintance. But there's nobody of any consequence in society, or who entertains, that Mrs. Fortesque does not make a point of knowing. Now her calling on the bride yesterday as one of Hamilton's friends—why she knows Hamilton just as you and I and half the town do—a slight bowing acquaintance; but now he's marrying a rich, fashionable girl, she finds out that it is incumbent on her as one of 'his friends' to call on his bride! And she won't effect her object by this sort of thing, either," she added, spitefully. "The young men are tired of seeing those two ugly girls of hers at every place they go."

"Oh, Mrs. Lyman!" said Emma, expostulatingly, yet half laughing.

"Of course, my dear," returned Mrs. Lyman, warmly, "that's the object. Everybody sees that, and she'll fail."

"Well, if that is the object," said Emma—

"And it is," put in Mrs. Lyman, decidedly.

"I don't agree with you in thinking she'll fail," continued Emma, without noticing the interruption. "I think the Fortesques are nice girls, and generally liked."

"No beauties you'll allow," said Mrs. Lyman, scornfully.

"No, not beauties," replied Emma, "but they get on as well as if they were. Besides, really Mrs. Lyman, to do Mrs. Fortesque justice, I never saw anything about her like a match-making mother."

"Oh, my dear!" ejaculated Mrs. Lyman, "she's very anxious to marry them off. And well she may be. The other two are growing up as fast as they can. I only think she is taking the wrong course. And then such a labour as she makes of it. She's somewhere every night."

"Oh, yes, sometimes at two parties of an evening, besides the Opera," said Charlotte. "There's no pleasure in society at such a rate. They have an idea that it is tawdry, I believe."

"Too absurd!" repeated Mrs. Lyman, who evidently had not yet discharged all her wrath; but being obliged to make other calls, she rose, and as Lady Teazle says, "left her character behind her," for she was not fairly out of the room before Emma laughed, and said:

"Poor Mrs. Lyman! She can't get over the Fortesques getting on so well in society. To be sure they do push for it, but they get it. And their being at Elliot's, where she was not asked, seems to have capped the climax of her vexation."

"And to speak so slightly of Rawley's party, too," said Charlotte. "That really was unkind in Mrs. Fortesque, for she knows how much Mrs. Lyman thinks of the Rawleys."

"That was the reason, of course," replied Emma, laughing. "She knows the Rawleys are Mrs. Lyman's grantees, for there's no one that thinks more of great people than Mrs. Lyman."

"No, how droll it is," said Charlotte: "every invitation is taken as such a compliment, and every omission as such a slight—as if there was any distinction in being asked anywhere. But she thinks so much of these things."

"That did strike me," remarked Mrs. Henry Willing, who happened to be present, but who had taken very little part in the conversation hitherto, "for I have always looked upon Mrs. Lyman as a person who rather pinned her faith upon fashionable people, and who rated her acquaintance very much according to their consequence."

"Oh, she does," said both the girls in a breath.

"It is that," continued Emma, "that makes her so angry with Mrs. Fortesque. They are intimate, and Mrs. Fortesque is always ahead of her in making fine acquaintance, and getting invited to parties that are rather exclusive. Now you'll see Mrs. Lyman won't rest till she visits and is invited at Elliot's too."

"But I really think she is unjust, Emma," said Charlotte, "in saying her object is to get the girls married."

"To be sure she is," said Emma. "But the fact is, her own head is so full of anxiety on the subject of marrying Cornelia, that she thinks every other mother's must be the same."

"The Fortesques are no beauties," continued Charlotte, "but they are quite as handsome as Cornelia Lyman."

"And a great deal pleasanter," replied Emma. "They have something at least, but poor Cornelia has nothing."

As the Appletons were "at home," that morning, the conversation was here interrupted by other visitors: Elliot's party was again the theme of discussion; the display of wealth and beauty on the occasion giving rise to much animated criticism.

"One of the most striking persons there was your friend Mrs. Norton, Miss Appleton," said Mrs. Henry Willing.

"I never saw her look more beautiful," remarked another.

"Nor more beautifully dressed," said Mrs. Willing, quietly, but with meaning. Emma coloured at this, for she felt the inuendo. Mr. Norton had failed not very long since, and the expensiveness of his pretty wife had not escaped its due portion at least of animadversion.

"What was it?" asked Emma.

"A very beautiful blue silk, with flounces of superb lace almost to the hips," replied Mrs. Willing, in a tone that conveyed as much reprehension as tones could convey.

"Oh, that's the same lace she has worn these three winters, Mrs. Willing," said Emma, vexed that her pretty friend could not even wear her old things without exciting unkind observations.

"It does not look well, Emma," said Mrs. Grayson, "for though it's not new, it's expensive, and not in keeping with their present circumstances. It's in bad taste."

Emma looked disconcerted, and said she thought "that a matter of very little importance when everybody knew the lace almost as well as they did Mrs. Norton herself."

Mrs. Willing, however, did not think so. Everybody knew the expense attendant on society, and she thought it altogether very indiscreet in Mrs. Norton to be out as constantly as she was. It excited much remark.

Whereupon an animated and piquant discussion ensued in which poor Mrs. Norton was well pulled to

pieces. Emma, however, defended her bravely, though driven from point to point.

That she was very expensive, if not extravagant, seemed to be settled beyond dispute, and Mrs. Willing was not willing to make any allowance for her youth and inexperience, or permit her beauty and grace any weight at all in the matter.

Emma was for overlooking everything. Mrs. Willing nothing, and the discussion was certainly as warm and personal as is ever deemed allowable among ladies; and when Mrs. Willing rose to leave no one remained behind, fortunately for Emma, but Mrs. Grayson, with whom the Appletons were quite intimate, and she gave vent to her indignation almost before Mrs. Willing was out of hearing.

"She is a pretty one," she exclaimed, "to find fault with Mrs. Norton. She is as expensive as her means will permit, herself, without Mrs. Norton's excuse of youth and beauty."

"But, my dear," interposed Mrs. Grayson, "her husband has not failed."

"No," said Emma, "because he is not a merchant. But everybody knows their circumstances. He is overhauled in debt, yet they entertain and give dinners, and she's for ever at the Opera! But because she's not a beauty, and does not care particularly for dress, she is very virtuous about poor Mrs. Norton!"

"Very true," said Mrs. Grayson, laughing. "I could not but be amused while she was talking to think how much that she was saying would apply equally well to herself. But people never think of that when they are laying down the law for others. But have you heard, girls, this story about Mrs. Crawford?"

"No. What?" they both asked.

And then followed a piece of scandal that had just burst upon the town too naughtily to repeat.

"Shocking!" and "Can it be true?" they both exclaimed.

"No doubt of it," replied Mrs. Grayson. "No one will visit her, and with much interest she continued to add circumstance and suspicion, one top of the other, without mercy or stint.

All minor gossip was forgotten in the engrossing interest of the new subject. Mrs. Grayson talked on till the French clock on the mantel-piece struck the dinner-hour, when she departed.

"What were you talking of, girls?" and with great interest they detailed Mrs. Grayson's bit of gossip.

"Strange!" said their mother, "that Mrs. Grayson should be the first to tell it."

"Why?" asked both daughters at once.

"Because just such an affair occurred in her own family some years ago," replied Mrs. Appleton.

"In hers! When?" exclaimed they, in astonishment. "I never heard that before."

"Oh, you can hardly remember it, I suppose," continued Mrs. Appleton. "It was just after I was married."

"Then," said Charlotte, laughing, "it's not surprising we do not remember the circumstance."

"I had forgotten it was so long ago," said her mother. "It made a great talk at the time, and then the scandal that had been dead and buried years and years was revived and listened to with no small degree of interest."

"How strange!" said Emma, "when her mother paused, 'that Mrs. Grayson should talk of Mrs. Crawford.'"

"I should think," said Charlotte, "she would avoid all such stories as carefully as possible."

"Oh, I suppose she thought we knew nothing about it," said Emma.

"But if we did not, she must," replied Charlotte. "People cannot forget such things themselves, though others may."

"Mrs. Grayson has gone through severe trials and mortifications in life," observed their mother.

"Then it ought to give her some charity for others," said Charlotte. "But she is the hardest woman I know."

"It appears to me that's always the case," said Emma. "One would think that suffering would soften and purify, but it does not."

"Not that kind of suffering," remarked their mother; "that which comes of mortification, and which we experience at the hands of our fellow mortals. There are few natures fine enough not to grow hard under it."

Emma heard her mother afterwards in a low voice telling her father the story she had just heard from her daughters, and giving Mrs. Grayson as authority.

"The less she says about it the better," drily remarked Mr. Appleton.

"You remember, my dear," continued Mrs. Appleton, "that affair in her family."

"To be sure," he replied. "A bad business. I always wondered how they got over it."

And then Mr. and Mrs. Appleton had a long, cosy, comfortable talk, in which things long past and forgotten were again raked forth and brought to life, as

the old couple warmed up in the reminiscences; and though Emma tried, she soon gave up attempting to keep the thread of grandmothers and great aunts—particularly as her father and mother frequently confounded the present with the past generation, and she found that the "young Tom Crawford" they were talking of was now the "old Tom" of present times; the "young Tom" of the day being almost a middle-aged man with a Tom, Jr., treading fast upon his heels.

Charlotte and Emma were soon talking over their morning visitors, and Emma again spoke with some warmth of Mrs. Willing's remarks upon Mrs. Norton, who happened to be Emma's particular admiration, her extravagance being, in her opinion, "very natural."

"I can conceive," she added, "of people's compounding sins they are inclined to, by damning those they have no mind to," but to abuse others for doing just what you are doing yourself passes my comprehension."

"It's the old principle, I suppose," said Charlotte, "Lord, I think these that I am not as other men."

"Yes, but," persisted Emma, "when you are as other men."

"Well, then, not so bad perhaps," said Charlotte, laughing. "Mrs. Willing takes comfort in thinking she is only expensive, while Mrs. Norton is extravagant. Everybody has her besetting sin, it seems."

"I wonder what ours is," said Emma. "If we have one?"

"Well," said Emma, said Charlotte, much amused; "if we have one. For my part I think we approach perfection as near as possible, 'Sans peur et sans reproche.'"

"Sans peur," certainly," said Emma, in the same tone of playful mockery, "if not 'sans reproche.' Well, but what do we abuse other people most for?" she added, "for, depend upon it, that's the particular amiable weakness we are given to ourselves."

"What do we abuse people most for?" said Charlotte. "Why, for abusing others, I think—and we are called satirical, you know."

"People in glass houses should not throw stones," said Emma.

"No, that is," said Charlotte, carelessly, "if they care about having their windows broken."

"Nobody likes to have their windows broken," said Mrs. Appleton, gravely, who just entering caught the last part of the sentence, which she took literally with a true housekeeper's feeling.

"That's true, mother," said both the girls, laughing at the odd application of her remark. "It's very true, though you did not mean it, in more senses than one."

But whether they remembered these sage reflections and kept them the next "Reception morning," we think very doubtful. They could see the folly of Mrs. Willing's and Mrs. Grayson's throwing stones, but that they abandoned the agreeable pastime themselves we will not take upon ourselves to say. F. E. F.

FACETIE.

"BILL," said Bob, "why is that tree called a weeping willow?" "Cause one of the sneaking, plaguey things grew near our school, and supplied master with switches."

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

"Whose pigs are those, my lad?" "Whoy they belong to that there big sow." "No, I mean who is their master?" "Whoy," again answered the lad, "that little un, he's a rare un to fight."

THE celebrated Malherbe dined one day with the Archbishop of Rouen, and fell asleep soon after the meal. The prelate, a sorry preacher, was about to deliver a sermon, and awakened Malherbe, inviting him to be an auditor. "Ah, thank you," said Malherbe, "pray excuse me; I can sleep very well without that."

HOW TO MAKE A HORSE GROW.—"That's a tall horse," said Laidlaw. "Yes. You can't account for it," replied the stable-boy. "No how," said Laidlaw. "He belongs to Hummins, the livery-man," replied the boy, "and his tallness comes through his having been regularly higher'd (hired) every day for the last seven years."

A STRANGE MISTAKE.—As a fisherman named Nantes was passing through St. Mary's, Scilly, at early morning, he was surprised and astounded to find the clothes of a man hanging to the iron rails of the chapel. They consisted of a black coat, vest, and extensions of the same colour, a hat, one boot, and other articles, with a gold watch, a silver toothpick, a new pair of black kid gloves, and the key of a door in the pockets. It was concluded that some one had committed suicide, probably by jumping over the adjacent pier; the crier was consequently communi-

ated with, the type was set for bills, and the drags got ready. Meantime the clothes were inspected by many, and at last recognized as being those of a gentleman last seen at the Western Hotel, where he had spent a good part of the previous evening. On this it was suggested that the dwelling-house of the person named should be visited, which had, of course, been thought unnecessary, as he lived by himself, and the key of the door was found in his pocket. However, some one did go to the house, and there found the householder in bed, as composed as if nothing out of the common had occurred. "Poor fellow! he had taken more than his head could stand, and on his way home had mistaken the chapel rails for the pegs of his bedroom, had undressed in the street, and walked home in the modest costume of the Greek Slave."

A MODERN ENGLISH DUEL.

An amusing story comes from Newcastle-under-Lyme, where it has been the one topic of gossip during the last few days.

Four professional gentlemen, residing in that town, were playing billiards, when one offered to bet that he could make a certain stroke, which produced a rejoinder from one of the others that he declared was an insult and an attack on his honour.

High words followed, and presently the injured one challenged his assailant to a settlement of the dispute with pistols. This was accepted, and the other gentlemen were requested and consented to act as seconds. It should be stated that only the challenger was really in earnest in the affair, and that the others regarded it as a joke.

To make a long story short, the four repaired to the house of one of them; pistols were borrowed, but only a pair of horse pistols were procurable, and these were loaded by the seconds, who put in the powder, but unknown to at least one of the principals, slyly dispensed with balls.

The challenger, who was throughout quite in earnest, having actually made his will, the party adjourned to the garden, a secluded spot, and were placed thirty paces apart, and the weapons were handed to them.

At a given signal both fired, and the challenged fell. His second ran to him, and, in raising him, dexterously smeared his face with a red colouring, having all the appearance of blood. The other stood still, as if rooted to the spot, pale as death, and trembling like a leaf, when he saw the effect of his fire. The body of the fallen man was carried into the house, and surgeons were sent for, or pretended to be sent for, but no one was able to come.

When the challenger recovered full possession of his senses, his distress was painful to witness. He took the hand of his supposed dead opponent, piteously moaned his fate, and cried aloud.

After lying still for some time, the dead man could stand it no longer. He laughed and jumped up, startling the other even more than before, but presently it dawned on the mind of the valiant challenger that he had been hoaxed, and, amid the laughter of the others, he rushed out of the house in a state of mind more easily imagined than described.

The whole story looks like a hoax, but its truth is vouched for by one, at least, of the parties to this modern English duel.

BEAUTY is worse than liquor; it intoxicates both the holder and beholder.

SOMEBODY tried to excuse a liar to Dr. Johnson, by telling him he must only believe half he said. "Ay," replied the doctor, "but which half?"

THE LAST TOAST.—The ladies:—May their virtues exceed even the magnitude of their skirts, while their faults are still smaller than their bonnets.

A DULL lecturer said:—"Fools are not all dead yet." "No," whispered a wag across the table, "or you wouldn't be here to say so."

NEVER let people work for you gratis, says an ancient philosopher. Two years ago a man carried a bundle for us, and we have been lending him two shillings a week ever since.

A LADY asked a noted doctor if he did not think the small bonnets the ladies wore had a tendency to produce congestion of the brain. "Oh, no," replied he, "the ladies who have brains don't wear them."

NEGRO SHREWDSNESS.—LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.—A clergyman told a negro he should love his enemies. "Me do love 'm." "What enemies do you love most?" "Rum and older, massa."

THE latest style of bonnet has turned up. It is described as consisting of two straws, tied together with a blue ribbon on the top of the head, and red tassels suspended at each of the four ends of the straws.

DANGEROUS USE OF GALL.—Editors who occasionally dip their nibs in gall or wormwood must be careful to eschew Edinburgh jurisdiction. The new provisional order contains amongst other crudities the following exquisitely "moral law," viz.:—"Every

person who in or near any street or court commits the following offence, shall, on conviction on the evidence of one or more credible witnesses, be liable to a penalty not exceeding five pounds for each offence, or in the discretion of the judge of police before whom he is convicted, may, without a penalty being inflicted, be committed to prison, there to remain for a period not exceeding sixty days (that is to say), every person who uses abusive language." *Query.* Would calling a gentleman an Adulterate be abusive language? Gentlemen of the third estate, beware! you may spend the autumn in Smith's Hotel!

"Pa, has Mr. Jones's eyes got feet?" "Why, my boy?" "Because I heard mother say to Mr. Doolittle that at a party, the other evening, Mr. Jones's eyes followed her all over the room."

CRIMINALS AND PAUPERS.

Not know how to treat our criminals! Don't we, though! Just see now.

First of all, you catch your criminal—a brutal wife-beater, we will say, or else a ruffianly garrotter. *Fiat experimentum in corpore villano.*

Then, having caught your criminal, cage him in a workhouse. Keep him on thin gruel, and not too much of even that. Bring him down to skin and bone, and take all the spirit out of him. Give him work like oakum-picking, stupefying and monotonous, and never let a ray of hope in to enlighten him.

Then, when he falls ill, which he is pretty sure to do, confine him in a sick-ward, which is crammed to suffocation. Huddle him with a herd of raving, filthy lunatics. Taint him with the breathing of a dozen diseased lungs. Keep him wakeful by the coughs of the asthmatic and consumptive. Crowd round him the beds of paupers dying of infectious cholera or fever. Prop him with hard pillows, fresh taken from a death-bed. Tend him with hard hands, hard eyes, and harder hearts. Let Ignorance and Malice watch by his side, and Drunkenness and Dirt be installed as his head-nurses. Give him physic by hap-hazard, measured by the rule of tipsy, shaking thumb and fore-finger. Dose him with a purge if he complain of being aguish, drench him with a salt-draught whenever he feels thirsty. Should he be paralyzed, take no heed of the bed-sores that will scourge him. Let him lie.

In short, treat your brutal criminal as you do your wretched pauper: Torture British vice to death as British innocence is tortured. Leave off petting your foul gal-boys, your assassins and garroters. mould your model prisons on the model of your workhouses. Let your convicts lead the dog's-life that your paupers long have led, with just a taste of the "cat" now and then by way of filipp. Then see the reduction there will be in gal-retains, and how the threat of workhouse torture will tempt vice to be virtuous.—*Punch.*

A GREAT LAW LUMINARY.—The Coal Commission, if they should require legal advice, have only to apply to the late Solicitor-General, who's a Collier?—*Punch.*

PARALYZING PIRCE OF NEWS FOR MR. B.—*Mrs. B.*—"Mr. B.! Mr. B.!!" Here's somebody been writing to *The Times* to say that when the banus have been put up after the Second Lesson, the marriage is an illegal one, and consequently void! Why, that's how we were married, Mr. B.!! Do you hear?—*Punch.*

ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

"Mamma, dear Mrs. Robinson has written to ask if I will go with her to the "Zoo" next Sunday. I should so like to."

"What, my dear, on Sunday! never."

"Why, but we go to the Kensington Gardens!"

"I disapprove of looking at beasts on Sunday!"

"But the people look at each other, Mamma; not at the beasts."

"If you are sure of that, my dear, you may accept Mrs. Robinson's invitation."—*Punch.*

A VERY STRONG ONION.—At the Thames Police-court, the other day, one William Onion was committed for trial on a charge of violently assaulting a policeman. He had been previously convicted eight times for assaults on the police, and once for ill-naming a publican. Mr. Onion was described as "a tall and strong-looking man." Onions generally are strong. This Onion appears to be absolutely insufferable.—*Punch.*

A REVERSE.

When the defeated Austrian flies
Across the Alpine ridge,
Fair Venice, with her Bridge o' Sighs,
Will soon her sighs abridge. —*Fun.*

THE CATTLE PLAGUE.

We have to acknowledge a letter from a puzzled agriculturist, who has received a printed form from a large cattle-food firm, and does not know how to fill it up. It is headed with this sentence:

"We, the undersigned, having used Blank's Food

during the time of the Cattle Plague, have escaped the rinderpest."

Our correspondent says that he does not know whether London cattle can write, but his can't. He has supplied them with pens, but they don't seem to know B from a bull's foot.—*Fun.*

BRIGHT AND WRONG.

"Tories are fools!" so Mill defines;
The Tories own he's right,
For every one of them declines
To be considered Bright. —*Fun.*

TOAST AND ROAST.—An acquaintance of ours being called on the other day to give the toast of "British Trade," proposed "Cumming and dry tobacco." Being called on for an explanation, he stated that he meant the great commercial principle—"Small profit and quick returns."—*Fun.*

SUMMER FESTIVAL.

COME—for the Year's imperial wealth is glowing
His largest wealth on every forest shrine,
And all the South-winds through the wood are blowing
Their harmonies diving.

Divine, with its fell, sunny, perfect treasure
Of queenly rose and royally-mantled tree;
No stunted largess, but an angel-measure
Is given unto thee.

To thee, the heir of all this wondrous glory,
This laughing paradise of colour, sound—
Yon rivulet that sings its dreamy story,
Yon blue sky sketched around.

The heir! Oh, ponder on that word's grand meaning.
The heir!—Of what?—this very rose-wreathed world,

With all its music, its voluptuous sheening,
Its flags of love unfurled!

This is thy kingdom! Oh, from mammon stealing,
From all that dirt of the tempestuous mart,
Show some small worthiness at least—some feeling
That proves a grateful heart! —*W. R. W.*

GEMS.

AGE is like the air we breathe; everybody feels it, but no one sees it.

Of all the dust thrown in men's eyes, gold dust is the most blinding.

It is not half the trouble to learn in youth that it is to be ignorant in old age.

Sorrow, though it ever sharpens the intellect, also sometimes sours the heart.

Go to strangers for charity, acquaintances for advice, and to relatives for nothing—and you will always have a supply.

It is ungenerous to give a man occasion to blush at his ignorance in one thing, who perhaps may excel in many.

Do one thing at a time—that's a rule. When you have done slandering your neighbours, begin to say your prayers.

A MAN who had lived much in society said that his acquaintances would fill a cathedral, but that a palpit would hold all his friends.

True joy is a serene and sober emotion; and they are miserably out that take laughing for rejoicing; the seat of it is within, and there is no cheerfulness like the resolutions of a brave mind.

PLEASURE is a rose, near which there ever grows the thorn of evil. It is wisdom's work so carefully to cull the rose as to avoid the thorn, and let its rich perfume exhale to heaven, in grateful adoration of Him who gave the rose to blow.

He who maintains the right, though countenanced by the few, must forego all expectations of popularity till there shall be less to censure than applaud in human conduct; and, when this is the case, the millennium will have dawned.

GRATITUDE is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul; and the heart of man knoweth none more fragrant. While its opponent, ingratitude, is a deadly weed; not only poisonous in itself, but impregnating the very atmosphere in which it grows with fetid vapours.

A WORD FOR THE EDINBURGH CABMEN.—At the annual social meeting of the cabmen Professor Blackie said he had as little as possible to do with cabmen, because a man ought to use his legs when he could—(laughter)—and he never used a cab except for the sake of his hat—(laughter)—or for the sake of his books which he might be carrying. Sometimes he

was obliged to take a cab, and then he had always found the cabmen most noble, honourable, and gentlemanly fellows. (Cheers.)

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

DRIED STRAWBERRIES FOR DESSERT IN WINTER.—Put three pounds of strawberries into a large dish, and sprinkle six pounds of white sugar over them. Let them stand until the next day, then scald them and put them back into the dish. On the third day place another pound of sugar over them, and scald them again. In two days more repeat the process. After this, place the strawberries on a hair-sieve to drain, and then on fresh plates every day until they are dried. They must be kept in tin canisters.

TO CLEAN LOOKING-GLASSES.—Take a newspaper or a part of one, according to the size of the glass. Fold it small, and dip it into a basin of clean cold water. When thoroughly wet, squeeze it out in your hand as you would a sponge, and then rub it hard over the face of the glass, taking care that it is not so wet as to run down in streams. In fact, the paper must be only completely moistened or damped all through. After the glass has been well rubbed with the wet paper, let it rest a few minutes, and then go over it with a fresh dry newspaper (folded small in your hand) till it looks clear and bright—which it will almost immediately, and with no farther trouble. This method (simple as it is) is the best and most expeditious for cleaning mirrors, and it will be found on trial—giving a clearness and polish that can be produced by no other process. It is equally convenient, speedy, and effective. The inside of window panes may be cleaned in this manner, to look beautifully clear, the windows being first washed on the outside. Also, the glasses of spectacles, &c. The glass globe of an astral lamp may be cleaned with newspaper in the above manner.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE other day an incomplete pack of cards of the fifteenth century was sold at the Hôtel Drouot for about £50.

More than 1,500,000 human beings derive their sole support from the culture and manufacture of the fibres spun by the silkworm.

DURING the eruption of Coniguina, in Guatemala, on the Pacific, in 1835, ashes fell in Jamaica, 800 miles eastward, and upon the deck of a vessel 1,200 miles westward.

SOME men, while cutting a main drain on the estate of Earl Brownlow, near Ellesmere, the other day, discovered, six feet below the surface, a canoe eleven feet long, and cut out of solid oak. It was in good condition.

GENERAL BEAUREGARD is still in Paris, and has had an audience of the Emperor. It is remarked that while in America he called himself plain "General Beauregard," he has had his name engraved on his cards thus:—"Monsieur le Général Toussaint de Beauregard."

On the occasion of the recent visit of the Prince of Wales to the training ship Worcester, a gun was fired at Erith by electricity to announce his arrival. The gun was placed on the pier 900 yards distant from the station. This is the first instance, we believe, of anything in the way of a royal salute being fired by electricity.

FASHION.

FASHION rules the world, and a most tyrannical mistress she is—compelling people to submit to the most inconvenient things imaginable, for fashion's sake.

She pinches our feet with tight shoes, or chokes us with tight neckhandkerchiefs, or squeezes the breath out of our body by tight lacing; she makes people sit up by night when they ought to be in bed, and keeps them in bed when they ought to be up and doing.

She makes it vulgar to wait upon one's self, and genteel to live idle and useless.

She makes people visit when they would rather stay at home, eat when they are not hungry, and drink when they are not thirsty.

She invades our pleasure and interrupts our business.

She ruins health and produces sickness—destroys life, and occasions premature death.

She makes foolish parents, invalids of children, and servants of all.

She is a despot of the highest grade, full of intrigue and cunning, and yet husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, and servants, black and white, voluntarily have become her obedient servants and slaves, and vie with one another to see who shall be most obsequious.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. STENZEL.—The proportions in chemical recipes are weighed, not measured.
A ONE YEAR'S SUBSCRIBER will find the recipe in our correspondence page No. 186.

MORIS, dark hair, blue eyes, and good looking. The gentleman must be good looking, and with a moderate income.

FLORENCE, Auburn hair, blue eyes, and considered pretty.
R. L. SPENCER.—You can soften, or rather render ivory elastic, by the use of dilute hydrochloric acid. (2.) Refer to Nos. 108 and 145 of THE LONDON READER.

VIOLET, seventeen, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, of medium height, musical, of an amiable disposition, and thoroughly domesticated.

W. H. S. (a tradesman), twenty, 5 ft. 6 in. in height, rather dark, steady, and not addicted to smoking. Would like a young woman between seventeen and twenty.

AN INQUIRER.—Dr. Manning was consecrated Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster on the 8th of June, 1865.

H. STANTFIELD.—The shore end of the Atlantic Telegraph wire was made fast in Valencia Bay on the 21st of July, 1865, and not on the 29th, as you have stated.

GALLINOLE.—To grow a zinc tree, dissolve acetate of lead in distilled or rain water; filter the solution thus obtained through white blotting-paper, place it in a suitable bottle, and suspend in it a small irregular-shaped piece of zinc.

LILLY MAY.—The French phrase you name, and which, by the way, you sadly mis-spell, is literally an oath; thus we decline to translate it, as being unfit, either in English or French, to pass the lips of a lady.

A CONSTANT READER.—Much depends upon the department you desire to enter. But even the lower would require a plain but sound English education. A Civil Service Guide, however, will give you every particular.

E. R. A.—To make cider without apples: Water, 1 gall. common sugar, 1 lb., tartaric acid, 1 to 2 oz., yeast, one table spoonful; shake well, make in the evening, and it will fit for use next day.

DAISY, sixteen, petite, fair, dark brown hair and eyes, of a lively and affectionate disposition, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondent must be well educated, and of gentlemanly manners.

LITTLE JACK, twenty-three, 5 ft. 4 in. in height, dark, good looking, and a mechanic with good prospects and a comfortable home. Respondent must be domesticated and willing to submit to a year's courtship.

W. G.—By special enactment, auctioneers are bound to furnish three days' notice of all sales by auction to collectors of assessed taxes and poor-rates, under a penalty of 50l. The collectors of police taxes have no such privilege preference.

BENEDICT.—Marriage Licences enable persons of full age, and minors, with the consent of parents or guardians, to be married in the church of the parish in which one of them has resided the specified time. They are procured at Doctors' Commons, St. Paul's Churchyard; or from any surrogate, and cost about 2s. 10s.

ABROUHAUT.—It is computed that out of 5,482,000 emigrants who have left the United Kingdom during the present century, 3,500,000 have sailed for the United States, and that the money remitted by settlers in North America to relatives in this country has averaged for the same period 500,000l. a year.

INDIAN.—How morbid must be your taste, or rather mind, to desire to "tan your skin brown so that it will not come off." Should you, however, still desire to disfigure yourself, we advise you to apply to the first gipsy, or village tramp, who will probably, after you have crossed his, or her, palm with a piece of silver, initiate you into the process of using walnut-juice.

A CONSTANT READER.—You are correct in your surmise, cerussium is a product of the Island of Oeyon. It is a mineral strongly resembling emery, and remarkable for its hardness. (2.) You may procure it (probably at Knight's, in Foster Lane, Chesapeake; or, if not, obtain all requisite information from those gentlemen.

F. G. S.—Uncovering the roots to some distance from the stem, filling in the space with about half a sack or more of sawdust, and covering it over with earth, a gentleman assures us he had found to be very successful in curing blight, and that the second year, after applying the remedy to four very badly-blighted apple trees, they yielded a remarkably fine crop of fruit. Two or three years ago some trees at Christchurch were treated in a somewhat similar manner with malt-dust. When the roots were uncovered some months after, they were found free from blight where there was any malt-dust left about them. It did not occur to us to inquire whether the sawdust had been obtained from any one particular sort of tree, which might have properties es-

pecially disagreeable to the insect. I have for some three years past found a couple of winter paintings of soft soap and sulphur, laid on with a common paint brush, from the smallest twig and down to the main stem, sufficient to keep my trees in a perfectly healthy state above ground, and free from blight as one may expect, when they have the misfortune to be alongside of neighbours who never do anything for their trees, although covered with the insect all the year round.

SINCERITY, twenty-five, middle height, fair, blue eyes, beard and moustache, generally considered handsome; possesses a high education, and is a gentleman by birth, character, and appearance, holds a respectable situation, and is an accomplished musician. The respondent must be of refined manners, of a respectable family, and give an ample description of herself.

MABEL, fair, sixteen, and although so young tired of silly flirtations. "Mabel" is 5 ft. 3 in. in height, large blue eyes, light brown hair, rosy cheeks, small mouth, hands, and feet, pretty, well educated, respectable, and passionately fond of music, but with nothing to offer but a loving heart. Respondent must be young, dark, and a tradesman. Hair approaching red.

GERT.—A woman can legally marry without the consent of her parents on attaining the age of twenty-one. The occasions, however, should be rare when such an unnatural course should be necessary. Parents can legally turn their daughters out of doors when they become twenty-one. It is seldom, however, we believe, that they use the law to such a foul advantage.

VON HALL.—The war between Austria, Prussia, and Denmark, on account of the Duchies, commenced in January, 1864, and ended in wresting the coveted territory from the Danish Crown.—This war was now raging, occasioned by rival claims to the spot, commenced in June, 1864. The end has yet to be seen. There is an adage that seems applicable to the case, viz., that "when thieves fall out honest men get their own again"—so it is possible the Duchies may again revert to Denmark.

MY SAXON BLONDE.

They say the dark-eyed blonde of Spain

Are passionate and fond;

But eyes of blue are tender and true;

Give me my Saxon blonde!

An arch coquette is the bright brunette;

Blithe and merry and gay;

Her love may last till the summer is past,

But my blonde's for ever and aye!

If birds of old the truth have told,

The sirens have raven hair;

But o'er the earth, since art had birth,

They paint the angels fair!

Ah, well!—may be, the truth to see

A lover is ever fond;

And I can't deny—nor will I try—

My love is a golden blonde!

J. C. S.

SPERMPOINT.—The death of Admiral Fitzroy occurred on Sunday, the 30th of April, 1865. It is, as you observe, impossible to estimate too highly the service the lamented officer rendered to the naval and mercantile interests of the country, or to ignore the fact that to his scientific warnings, perhaps thousands of valuable lives have been preserved from the perils of the ocean. Yet no national recognition of such eminent services to society has hitherto been manifested.

G. P. VERR.—Napoleon Bonaparte was proclaimed Emperor of the French on the 18th of May, 1804. His nephew, Louis Napoleon, the present ruler of France, was, after many years of exile, elected a member of the National Assembly of the French Republic on the 12th of June, 1848, and on the 11th of December of the same year was installed President of the Republic. The Revolution of December, 1851, enabled him to dissolve the National Assembly, and after the fashion of our Cromwell with the Long Parliament in this country, and on the 7th of November, 1852, by a decree of the Senate, he was proclaimed Emperor under the title of Napoleon III.

EDITH, a young, accomplished, and rather pretty girl of eighteen, has quarrelled with her lover through an inopportune visit of a cousin about her own age, whose personal attractions she admits are quite equal to her own. But who, she imagines, receives more attention from her swain than is consistent with his professions of fidelity to herself, and after having accused him of inconstancy, and parted from him in anger, "Edith" now regrets her hastiness, and asks how she ought to act in the matter. It is quite evident the young lady is of a jealous disposition, and ready to take umbrage at every trifling. Unless she will resolve to conquer this tendency to make herself and every one around her miserable, she had better give up all ideas of marriage.

POLITICUS.—The present premier is the 14th Earl of Derby. His lordship was Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1839-43; Colonial Secretary, 1843-44; again, 1841-46; Premier, 1852; again, 1858. (2.) Mr. Disraeli is for the third time Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons, the right honourable gentleman having served in the same office in 1852 and in 1853-9. (3.) The present Lord Chancellor, Lord Chelmsford, was, as Sir Frederick Thesiger, raised to the same high office, with a peerage, in 1853. His lordship began life as a midshipman in the royal navy, and fought at the Battle of Copenhagen, under Lord Gambier. (4.) General Peel, the new Secretary-at-War, is the brother of the late Sir Robert Peel, and served in the same capacity in the Derby Government of 1855-9.

A VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADESMAN.—You are right. The portable fire-engine named the "Extinguisher," should be known to all. The apparatus consists of a hollow case, or shell—carried usually upon the fireman's back—is charged with definite proportions of water, carbonate of soda, and tartaric acid. It is, in fact, another sort of soda-water machine. When the tartaric acid comes in contact with the carbonate of soda, it sets free carbonic acid gas, which then pressing powerfully upon the water contained in the chamber, projects it to a considerable distance when the tap communicating with the latter is turned. This pressure is equivalent to about 70 lbs. to the square inch, and is capable of forcing a thin jet of water to a distance of from thirty to forty feet. Soda is known to retard flame, and carbonic acid immediately arrests combustion, and thus these two substances, being, together with water, projected upon a burn-

ing mass, the flames become rapidly extinguished. (2.) Yes, numerous experiments have been made, which have proved the efficacy of "putting out" fire which had spread over extensive surfaces of wood and tar. (3.) It is cheap and portable, and may remain for months charged, and yet be ready for use at a moment's notice.

MILLIE SINCERITY.—If, as you say, you are willing to "give hard and constant practice," providing you have an ear for music, you may in the course of two or three years become a fair pianist, albeit you have reached the age of eighteen. You had better not, however, make the attempt without you are in possession of great patience, and will undisturbedly practise at least six hours a day. Try three hours in the morning, and three at a later period of the day. (2.) As a rule, we object to name any special tradesman, but in this instance we may name Messrs. Chappell, of Bond Street, who advertise the instrument that would suit you.

A CORRESPONDENT SAYS.—"Four years since I took an old country house infested with rats, mice, and flies. I stuffed every rat and mouse hole with chloride of lime. I threw it on the quarry-floors of the dairy and cellars. I kept a succession of it under the chests of drawers, or some other convenient piece of furniture in every nursery, bed-room, or drawing-room. An extraordinary glass vase held a quantity of the foot of each staircase. Stables, cow-houses, piggeries, all had their dose, and the result was that I thoroughly routed my enemies. Last year was a great one for wasps; they wouldn't face the chloride; though in the dining-room, in which we had none—as its smell, to me most refreshing and wholesome, is not approved by all persons—we had a perpetual warfare. And all the comfort for eight months!"

STAR OF INDIA.—The long-deferred decision on the claims to share in the division of the Kiltree and Banda spoils has at last been given, after a lapse of nearly nine years since the booty was gallantly won. The amount to be divided originally amounted to nearly half a million sterling, but it has to be filtered through the fingers of an army of lawyers of every grade, who will clutch from 50,000l. to 80,000l. as their reward for the subtlety that interposed objections and obstacles at every stage, and who, by the delay so occasioned, have sent many a brave fellow who assisted to win the prize to a workhouse grave, after wearing out the remnant of his existence in poverty and hopeless despair. The arrangements of our Prize Courts are admirable, and only framed for the benefit of agents.

JEAN BART, twenty-five, with an income of 120l., arising from ground rents, and holding an official appointment that produces him 200l. more per annum, is tired of bachelor life, and the too close supervision of a maiden aunt, who, as he thinks, stands too rigidly upon etiquette and decorum, but he is allowed no opportunity to make acquaintance with any one with a view to marriage. His aspirations for the beam ideal of domestic felicity are not extravagant. The young lady he would select must not be more than from eighteen to twenty-one years of age, of respectable family, fair education, and musical; if pretty, so much the better, but good temper is indispensable, and next to her husband she must love her home above all other objects in the world. Can any of our fair young readers sympathise with the yearnings of "Jean Bart," and in pity extricate him from the cheerless gloom of undimmed "single blessedness?"

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.—

AND is responded to by—"Helena," twenty-one, affectionate, good tempered, very fond of children, with no fortune, however, but the wealth of a loving heart to offer.

S. F. S. by—"E. C.," twenty-four, tall, ladylike, dark hair and eyes, good figure, clear complexion, thoroughly domesticated, of a highly respectable business family, possessed of a little money, and would make a good wife. "E. C." is religiously inclined, but of a cheerful and happy disposition. J. W., the "tradesman" who would prefer an English woman, by—"A. E." and "L. A." in "E.," fair, blue eyes; "L. A.," very dark. Both industrious and domesticated, used to business, and each will have a small property.

ALFRED H. by—"A Constant Reader," eighteen, who is considered exceedingly pretty, with dark hair and eyes, and a very good pianist.

LILLY by—"Bonnie," a domestic servant, twenty, fair complexion and blue eyes, and—"L. L.," tall, very fair, good tempered, domesticated, and would make her house and husband very happy.

FREDERICK by—"Jenny," who has blue eyes, brown hair, and thinks she can safely say she is pretty.

MARY D. D. by—"Lettice Leppo," who would deem it a compliment if "Mary D. D." will send him her *carte*, with any particulars.

LILLY by—"Fitzroy," twenty-three, well educated, fair, an income of 100l. per year, with prospects of yearly increase, and of a respectable family; and—"J. E. T.," twenty-one, 5 ft. 5 in. in height, light hair, brown eyes, good looking, of a respectable family, steady, pious, and industrious, with a little money.

POLLY by—"Amicus," twenty-four, 5 ft. 6 in. in height, fair, in an excellent situation, with good expectations; and—"Oriflamme," nineteen, 5 ft. 9 in. in height, dark hair and blue eyes, in a merchant's office, with good prospects.

GEORGE by—"George B.," 5 ft. 11 in. in height, soundly educated, and in a good position as clerk, at a salary of 80l.—"P. S. W.," a chemist, twenty-one, middle height, handsome, fond of music, and possessed of money; and—"Constant Reader," the son of a tradesman, twenty, fair, medium height, good tempered, and of a kind and generous disposition.

S. M. B. by—"W. C.," a bachelor, forty, who would like to correspond with her, as he is in want of a wife.

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